

# Barbara Halliday

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# Barbara Halliday

A STORY OF THE HILL COUNTRY  
OF VICTORIA.

.. BY ..

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“Fronds from the Blacks’ Spur,”  
“Corinne of Coral Bluff,” “Songs from the Hills,”  
&c.

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## THE OLD STREET, CHERRY'S POINT.

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A-DOWN this street I walked in sunny morns—  
A blithesome thing;  
Spring threw sweet kisses from the green-clad hill,—  
Oh, hearts can sing! Oh, hearts can sing!  
How long ago was it? But yesterday?  
I feel young still;  
Yet where are they who joined me in my play?  
Called hence, alas!—*who wanders where he will?*

A-down this street good morrows greeted me;  
The tones resound  
With all the freshness of my childhood's day,  
As child-feet bound—as child-feet bound.  
How pleasantly they rang?—and still shall ring  
For evermore!—  
The chords no discord warps to tuneless string;  
Once heard, kept aye—Love's unforgotten lore.

A-down this street what bright hopes tripped with me  
Of roseate wing;  
What-worlds to conquer, and what joys to come,—  
And it was Spring—and it was Spring!  
How long ago was it? Ah, say not long!  
Am I so old?  
For still my heart breaks out in happy song:  
Not here Life's tale—not here Life's tale is told!

MARION MILLER KNOWLES.



## CHAPTER I.

### Jim Halliday's Little Girl.

**S**HE was born in the days when gold was so plentiful that lucky diggers, in a spirit of bravado, were wont to light their pipes with pound-notes. The first music that greeted her infant ears was the noise of the "stampers" in the Hope crushing-machine close by. Miners formed the first sympathetic audience to her stammering baby utterances; and miners' rough, but kindly, hands guided her first tottering little footsteps. From her birth onward many a nugget found its way into her money-box; and, long before she was able to wear them, gold earrings and brooches, solid as the picks and shovels and water-wheels they represented, were showered on "Jim Halliday's little girl."

"Jim" was a "general merchant," and sold everything from china ornaments to wine and spirits. His was the first large store opened on the diggings; and it was owing to his enterprise that Cherry's Point was so well supplied with the necessaries and luxuries of life. He was also a gold-buyer, and business of every kind came in his way. Representatives of every nationality found entrance into Halliday's store—Italians from the hills, Germans from Drury Creek, Scotch and Irish men from Mulholland Point,

Hindoos from the Coach Road, Chinamen from 'Possum Gully.

And "Jim" got on well, and was liked by all. He would write a letter for a jabbering Chinese as willingly and painstakingly as a letter for a 'towney' to the Old Country; and, moreover, its contents were known to be as safe with him as 'with the dead.'

Of Irish-Scotch extraction, with some American experience thrown in, Halliday was a big, burly man, of genial disposition and a generous spirit, and no man's enemy but his own.

Mrs. Halliday was what the diggers called "a fine figure of a woman," and looked to best advantage on horseback in the neat-fitting habits made to order for her "in town"—the local term for Melbourne. She was a handsome woman, of superior intellect. She kept out of the store, and also away from "the crowd," and was a woman of no little importance in the Cherry's Point of those days.

Barbara, born on the Ranges, was her second child—the first, a boy, having died in infancy; and, whether in her dead babe's grave on the lonely hillside, lay buried, too, the richest of the treasure of her mother-love—or whether through the disappointment of having given birth to a girl when another son was hoped for—the love given to little Barbara by her mother was not nearly equal in depth and strength to that bestowed upon her by her father.



And, seeing "Beebo" (as she called herself) was the apple of her "daddy's" eye, the men who frequented the store set the child up as a queen amongst them, and would, no doubt, have utterly spoiled her, had it not been for the counteracting influence of her mother's somewhat drastic training.

"Beebo" was of a bright, fearless nature, and went willingly to the roughest digger among them all—showing, however, a marked partiality for good looks and refinement of manner.

When besieged by many admirers on a Saturday, it was no uncommon practice of hers to gaze at each one meditatively for a few moments, and then toddle up to the most presentable, curling her fat little fingers round his hand, and saying peremptorily, "Take Beebo up, pretty man!" The loudest of guffaws never daunted her,—nor any other noise, for the matter of that! The more lively the customers were, the better she liked it.

She made a pretty enough picture as she sat perched up—shoulder high—her blue eyes shining between their long, dark lashes, pink roses in her healthy little cheeks, and her golden curls dancing round her dainty head as if they were living sprites themselves.

Surrounded always by a masculine atmosphere, she grew to like the odour of cigars and tobacco, and even to tolerate the smell of spirits, when she was drawn close to a whiskered cheek; all

the bustle of an active life that is inseparable from a thriving mining centre was delightful to her childish heart, and fed an imagination that was more vivid than her parents suspected.

Cherry's Point was then a synonym for gold. Had not one of its pioneers shod his very horses with gold—to celebrate the occasion of a “visit from Royalty” to Australia? Was not its “Evening Star” turning out more pure gold to the ton than any other mine in Victoria? And surely where thousands of pounds were made, thousands of pounds would stay?

The township stood with hills before and behind it, and hills around it,—with half its houses on the slopes of hills, and the other half bordering streets that were surely “laid” by bullock drivers, so devious were their ways!

At one end of the town were two quartz-crushing machines, whose ponderous stampers pounded away day and night. At the other was a “deep cut” into what had the appearance of a gigantic chalk-pit—alongside which, however, was a well-trod path to the outlying part of the straggling township, where was located the

\* Visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to Melbourne, when “champagne lunches” were still the order of the day, and when “Tom Cherry’s” name was on everyone’s lips, through the above memorable climax to a general outburst of wild and fantastic extravagances in His Highness’s honour. (Cherry afterwards died penniless in a ward of the Benevolent Asylum department of the District Hospital, near which he had amassed a fortune.)

District Hospital and Benevolent Asylum—then in charge of a capable master and matron of the name of Seagrove. Through the “Deep Cut”—which never received any other title—regularly passed most of the visitors to this popular institution.

From the Hospital, built on the cottage-plan, led onward a well-made road through picturesque scenery of the Alpine type, bringing the traveller, after a walk of about three miles, to a smaller township, dignified by the name of Rowley's Creek.

Towering above Rowley's Creek was a peak called the “Never Mind”—the home of a courageous few, who, like eagles, built the home ‘eyrie’ wherever a space between the rocks gave room, and had their reward by being able to produce the best flowers and fruit in the ranges, in addition to the advantage of being entirely free from the invasions of afternoon callers!

To the left of Rowley's Creek, a narrow track followed the river to the Golden Bar.

This was the home of the prospector and his dish! And, here, beards could grow as long as they liked, man struggled with his own washing, and opinions could be as free as the wind, and as vehement as flames of fire.

Here dwelt the ‘possum-hunter and the bear-killer,—with none to question his right of living the “simple life.”

Cherry's Point was the goal of all their hankerings after pleasure and the delights of civilization; and Melbourne might have been ten thousand miles away, for all it held of attraction for them. They were content to keep in touch with it through the medium of weekly newspapers, which their mental appetite literally devoured.

**R**INGING through the forest arches,  
Chimed the wood-elves' matin bell;  
Fairy hands decked every portal,  
Fairy voices filled the dell



## CHAPTER II.

“Patsy.”

**D**OWN here—as to Rowley’s Creek, and up to the Never Mind—came, weekly, Halliday’s “Patsy,” with his pack-horses of stores for the diggers—Patsy the honest, and simple, and God-fearing, who brought no racy anecdotes, who gathered no scandal, but who “let out” many a bit of news to give zest to a monotonous life!

Rowley’s Hotel had no attractions for Patsy; but “doing a bit of business for ‘the master,’” had.

And so the gossip-lover lay in wait for him, on pretence of wanting to know what “new goods” were in,—and thus got his “penn’orth of news.”

On other days, Patsy’s labours took him a wide round, to the opposite end of “the Point,” where were situated “Foley’s Bend” and “Picadilly,” “Drury Creek,” and “Mountain Home,”—each dowered well with that natural beauty which is the delight of the true artist.

But true artists rarely came as far as Cherry’s Point! Their artistic souls rarely carried them past the terrors of Flour-Bag Hill, on the other side of Mountain Home—a renowned spot which demanded physical vigour for its ascent—re-

warding the persevering toiler, however, with the most magnificent views from its crown.

Drury Gully was a thing of beauty, particularly in spring time, when its waters sang and gurgled, as if beside themselves with ecstasy; and wild violets, and everlastings, blue-bells, and pink-stars, trailing "wild fuchsia," and climbing snow-white clematis, made a glory of delicate colouring which seemed blended by fairy hands.

Then there were Right Hand Branch, and Left Hand Branch—arms of the Goulburn, which met in the centre of the township, and were spanned by a bridge.

From Left Hand Branch, in the proper season, Patsy would bring home to "Miss Babo," as he called her, the most luscious of wild raspberries,—at sight of which she would shriek with delight,—being as much enamoured of their rich crimson colour as of their fresh taste.

The Evening Star Hill, too, had its complement of scattered homes, and overlooked McDonald Gully, where another crushing machine worked untiringly.

The "Evening Star" rose like a precipice sheer from the main street; but man's ingenuity had contrived a way of turning it to account as an accessible enough part of the township. A winding stair led up the face of the rocky wall from the main street to a natural terrace, on which was built the chief hotel,—behind the picturesque structure, on a corresponding terrace, running



the "cottage bedrooms," which mainly served for the accommodation of passing travellers.

In the heart of the ranges rose the Goulburn—there, a gentle, laughing stream—afterwards, an imposing river, gathering new volume and velocity, as it was fed by the innumerable small tributaries racing ever from the hills.

Patsy could have "written a book" on the Goulburn's vagaries,—out with it in all weathers as he was.

But Patsy was one of the "silent ones" of earth, and took everything as it came; "*an' welcome be the will o' God!*"

Jim Halliday was lucky in his men. He had a book-keeper at his desk with the soul of a poet in his weakly frame, and a face to correspond—a man to whom his daughter was to owe much, as mind and heart developed; and an under-manager behind his drapery counter, whose pulses beat in tune with all that music calls her own. In the early days good men did not stop to choose between the various means of livelihood. They put their hands to what came first in their way.

Jim was not musical,—he had never got beyond "Hail Columbia, Happy Land," and it was doubtful if he ever knew "St. Patrick's Day" from "The Boyne Water"; but, for all that, he was very anxious that his daughter should some day excel in whatever came under the heading of accomplishments,—so

Tom Barry was duly instructed to teach Beebo "whatever songs were going."

This, Tom conscientiously did, and had an apt pupil in the precocious little girl—his reward being that she did not lead him quite such a trying life as she did the rest of his sex!

She adored the bookkeeper, Dan McRae, perhaps because he ruled her, not she, him—one grave look of his being sufficient to quell any of her childish storms of rage.

But of Patsy she made a slave, pure and simple. As he plodded away in the vegetable garden at the back of the house on his one quiet day of the week, digging potatoes, or setting cabbages, nothing delighted the little tyrant more than to suddenly spring on his back, and stay there, till she had him nearly flat with mother earth; or to hide his "lesson-books" (for, though over forty, Patsy went to night-school, having a great respect for "the larnin'"), and look the picture of innocence and baby sweetness while he hunted everywhere—talking to himself about "fairies or divils" mislaying them.

She also kept the honest soul in terror of her being kicked by the horses, through her boy-like fondness for the wide, clean stables redolent of the smell of fresh hay. She soon learned to distinguish one horse from another, and to commit their names to memory—"Boxer, Trust, and Killarney; Darkie, Prince, and Duke."

Dolls, for Beebo, never had half the attraction of "something alive." French doll, or Dutch, its usual fate in her dimpled arms was to hang head downwards.

She would sit as still as a mouse, that the pigeons might come close to her, and shiver with ecstasy at the sight of a robin-redbreast on the fence. Out in the bush she would lie contentedly for hours on the grass, watching the magpies and listening to their contented little gurgles of joyous melody.

A passion for colour, a passion for "life," an ear attuned to song, and a foot that danced as naturally as young leaves in the spring wind—Barbara Halliday had all these. Day by day, like buds in the first rays of summer sunshine, sweet girlish attractions unfolded, and Dan McRae, watching her from his lonely office window, often wondered whether clear, or blurred, gold-edged or sombre-tinted, would be the pages of her future history!



**H**ER thoughts are swans of sunlit wing,  
Where blue lakes dream, and sky-larks sing.



## CHAPTER III.

### Opening Petals.

**I**N those days Jim Halliday went frequently to Melbourne—sometimes by the Warra Warra Track, sometimes by the more travelled road that led to Mossfield—from whence the journey could be more comfortably continued by train. Though a coach came by way of Warra Warra Track, it only ran in the summer season; and the usual procedure, in between seasons, for families who wished to go citywards, was to travel “in the drays.”

The carriers were, as a rule, a sober, reliable class of men, who saw to the comfort of women and children as far as the means at their disposal and the limited accommodation allowed. Their usual calculation was for a three days' journey, and they were generally up to time, either coming or going.

Halliday often went with the gold-escort. It was an imposing sight to see “the escort” start—the sun glittering on the troopers' helmets, their splendid horses vying with each other in their eagerness to be off. Such an event never failed to draw the population out of doors. Bush-

rangers on the roads lent an exciting element to the proceeding.

Jim Halliday looked well on horseback, and the townsfolk were proud of him, and never let him go without a cheer. "Faith, he looks as if he were the general of an army, he does, an' more power to him! Good luck go with you, James, old boy!"

It was said that while travelling alone on Warra Warra Track, Halliday was once bailed up by four bushrangers; and, only that his well-known name was discovered by one of the gang before they had finished operations, he would never have seen daylight again. His universal popularity saved him, and he was allowed to return with his belt-purse untouched.

Mrs. Halliday always rode to town, changing horses after fifty miles. She was a capable and fearless horsewoman, and feared neither man nor ghost. And she could use a rifle "with the best."

The home-coming of either parent from these periodical trips meant for Beebo wonderful toys and hours of wild excitement none too good for her active little brain. In due time there came a day when she herself was taken; after elaborate preparations, "down the Track"—on, on, towards the great city—tied on a packhorse—ignominiously strapped to it, quite too securely for her liking!—travelling without a break through hitherto unknown regions, where the trees were



so high that they seemed forbidding giants to her fertile imagination; and where the tree-ferns spread endless rows of wonderful umbrellas beneath.

Past musk, and sassafras, and 'Australian myrtle,' past lightwood and gum, on, on, to a place where were hurrying, bewildering crowds of people, the glare of many lights, the deafening uproar of many noises—how different to the gentle hubbub of the mining store on Saturday afternoons! The child hid her face, and wept with terror.

In after years, the name of Melbourne aroused a confused memory of magical toys, of pretty dresses, of men and women coming and going—some teasing her, some patting her head kindly; and a calmer recollection of placid waters and "beautiful sea-shells," but of nothing more,—for the time had not been ripe for the understanding that comes with seeing. She was glad to get back to the hills, and to the faces she knew. An intense fondness for outdoor life seemed to develop from that period, and she was never so happy as when gathering the wildflowers on the slopes of the hills, hunting for maidenhair in the crevices of the rocks, or fishing for "yabbies" in Drury Gully.

Mrs. Halliday sent her to a small private school kept by a lady friend; but the regrettable fact must be recorded that, on one or two occasions, Miss Beebo "played the wag," and was found

by the river, with her pretty white pinafore tied up to the waist—a sight to “make the angels weep”—and enclosing all the pebbles her wilful little hands could manage to gather from the shallows.

Water drew her as it draws a duck; and, one day in the winter, when the Goulburn was running high, a woman’s shriek for help clove the air that had been tranquilly coming in Halliday’s office windows since early morn; and young McRae rushed down the back steps, to hear from the opposite side of the river, that Beebo had somehow found her way to it, and been washed down-stream.

He threw off his coat as he ran—keeping his eye on the waters; and, suddenly seeing a blue speck rise for a moment where the waters were deepest, he dived, and rescued the child—only just in time—for she had twice sunk beneath the waves. For months afterwards, the little girl gave a quaint and pathetic description of her thoughts and feelings as “the waves choked her.” Her gratitude to McRae for her deliverance from death led to the awakening of a passionately-loving heart; and, from that day onwards, began Barbara’s real education. She had found “a hero”—someone out of the story-books to look up to with reverential admiration—someone “to copy!”

It was the second great event of her little life; and she was beginning to think deeply on her

own account. She became more amenable to discipline, and eagerly imbibed whatever she was taught. Her hero should never more have occasion to complain of an inattentive pupil. Had he not said she "must have been saved for something good!"

There were no kindergarten schools then; but McRae, with his love of botany, made it an excellent substitute for eye and ear and hand training, and contrived to implant as well many a high ideal in the child's soul. Barry "put her right" in the "pieces" and songs she laboriously practised; and Patsy heard her catechism when "mother" was busy with the numerous callers who disturbed the general routine of the day.



OVER the SILENT SEA,  
Deepened the glow  
Gleaming from unseen heights,  
On fields of snow!



## CHAPTER IV.

### The Field of Snow.

AS time went on, Barbara saw less of her father than of old. James Halliday had his 'dour turns' now, like other people, and his hearty laugh was growing less frequent. Mining speculations into which he had somewhat heavily plunged against his wife's advice, were turning out a cause of worry and anxiety. He loved his little girl just as fondly as ever, but a tangled skein in his business affairs took more of his time and attention than he had ever dreamed he would care to expend on anything. However, he did his part by his daughter, according to the light that was in him. He taught her to ride, and shoot, and encouraged her in all exercises that tended to develop her physically. None among the girls of her age had a finer carriage or exhibited more animal courage than she.

To her mother he left almost entirely her training in morals and manners. If she grew up as good as his wife, she "would do!" And under Mrs. Halliday's refining influence, Barbara *was* doing well—though she showed a strong distaste for household tasks, which fretted her mother, and often caused friction between the two.

She devoured every book that came in her way, and it soon became necessary to sort the con-

tents of the book-case—a miscellaneous assortment having gathered there through the years.

McRae was the first to read lengthy poems to her, and to explain their hidden meaning. Proud to show that she, too, could read and understand, she would commit many of these to memory, and repeat them for him, to his and her father's immense gratification.

But her mother took more pride in her voice as a singer than in its use as an elocutionist, and often took a volume of good poetry from the child, in order to insist upon the "practising" of standard vocal exercises and the sentimental songs of the day. Long, dreary hours in those days were given, even by the child in pig-tails, to the supposed study of the 'art divine' which is, beyond all other, inborn.

At first, the piano as a musical instrument was completely satisfactory to Barbara; but, as she grew older, the violin grew to have such an irresistible fascination for her that she was allowed to take lessons from the town-fiddler—a master of his art, who should have had, but never did have, "a career." A musician to his finger-tips by nature, the struggle of his parents to earn sufficient daily bread for a numerous family, had thrust the delicate lad early into life's background.

Poor old Johnny Lennox! To earn a bare living he had to be at everybody's beck and call,—playing for a ball one night, teaching "tunes"



to stupid pupils the next—now playing for a wedding or a christening—now pouring his soul out in strains no one understood, in the lonely hut on the hill which he called “home.” “Sure, Johnny’s never alone,” ’twas said, “’tis fine dances with the spirits of the bush he has when other folk are sleeping!”

Barbara Halliday proved to be, to the clever old musician, his one pearl of great price. Her fingers were “made for the strings”; the inner self of the girl stood revealed in the music she learned to draw from them. And the Hallidays hoped, with pardonable pride, that “a brilliant future” might be before their child. “Didn’t the great artists of the world shine forth from just such sequestered surroundings?”

Just at this juncture, when all other studies bid fair to be entirely given up for the more entrancing one of the violin, McRae fell ill; and, when on his feet again, he was ordered away to a warmer climate by the Melbourne doctor, for whose advice his employer had sent him away on a brief holiday—consumption having already set its dread seal upon him.

Through Halliday’s influence, he managed to get light employment on a boat going to Japan, and was obliged to bid farewell—perhaps a last farewell—to the little girl who had, since her babyhood, filled a long-aching void in a heart full of chivalrous tenderness towards all living things, yet for years fated to stand peculiarly alone.

He was quite unprepared for the agony of grief which the child showed. With scalding tears and passionate kisses, she clung to him, and begged him not to leave her; she would "make him well again," would "take him out for walks," and learn everything he wished—even give up her beloved violin—if he would only stay! "I can't bear you to go! Dear, dear Dan, you must not go!"

He was surprised, and touched, at the depth of feeling in what he had thought a somewhat fickle and wayward little heart. He soothed her with tender words and caresses and promises of return.

"Anyway, you will still have Tom and Patsy, little girl!"

"Tom and Patsy aren't you!"

"You will have father and mother," he added gravely, stroking her long, fair hair.

"Yes," said Barbara; "but"—a puzzled frown upon her brow—"they aren't *you*, either"; and a little sob caught her breath.

"Beebo, if I had to go even further away—to a country out of this world altogether—and could never come back, however much I longed to, do you think you would still remember me, child? Do you think you would always be wanting me to 'come back'; just the same as now?"

The child followed his every word wistfully, guessing that some deeper meaning lay beneath their surface; and, when his questions ended, she

stroked his face with a tenderness as of a mother, and answered sadly, but without tears:

"Oh, Dan, oh, dear Dan, of course I would; and then, perhaps, if you *couldn't* come back, God would send somebody in a big, big ship, to take me straight to you!"

"My little girl! My little girl!"

The man crushed her to his breast, and bent his head over her curls to hide the hot tears that were gathering in his own eyes. The woman he had loved had never loved him in return. Life, but for this child's innocent devotion, had been very barren of affection; and—now his doom had been spoken! In his heart, he knew he would never return. What last words could he leave with this loving little one, that they might bring forth good fruit in after years, when passion was awakened, and she needed more than ever a guiding hand?

"Barbara!" he called, suddenly, as if she were not anear, but far off.

The child started; it was so seldom he called her by the "stiffer" title her father and mother rarely used.

"Barbara, it will soon be winter time here!"

"Yes, Dan."

He took her hand, and led her to the window.

"What will you be able to see from this window then, dearie?"

"Only snow, Dan—shivery, white snow—all over the roofs of the houses, and the roads, and

the grass!" She shuddered as with cold as she spoke.

"You told me last winter, Barbara, that it was a 'beautiful' sight; that it made you think 'of lovely things'?"

"Oh, yes, Dan, so it does; but this winter you won't be here, you see!"

"Well, I want you to look at the snow, when it is here again, and feel as if I *were* here talking to you, and that this is exactly what I am saying: '*Little girlie, keep your soul as white as the snow, but let it warm, like the snow, all that lies beneath it!*' The Saviour of mankind told us to 'keep ourselves unspotted from the world.' You cannot understand what that means now; but, some day, when you are years older, something may remind you of me, and you will probably think of the happy days of childhood spent in this beautiful spot—and then—then—perhaps you will say, 'Dan, dear Dan, I have kept my soul like the snow—and unspotted from the world!'"

His tenderly-intoned voice broke a little; but Barbara, dry-eyed, listened intently to every word—the look on her face showing that, already in imagination, she stood alone, gazing at the snow lying heavily on the house, and hill, and path, as it was wont to do for weeks at a time in Cherry's Point!

Her lips moved noiselessly with the sound of the last words; then she said: "*But you won't*

*hear me?"*—and her soft blue eyes dilated a little, as if the raven wings of the Spirit of Fear were already overshadowing her young soul.

McRae smiled, and his voice had a remote tone in it that made her look up at him in wonder, as he answered:

"Perhaps I will! God is good—perhaps I will!"

For a few moments the child could not take her eyes off her companion's rapt countenance as he looked upward, "just as if he saw something" she could not see. In the light that streamed through the window, he looked like the picture of Saint Michael in the church on the hill which had been presented as a thank-offering by a wealthy mine-owner who had been miraculously preserved from a cruel death.

Filled with awe, she did not move till he turned away; and, ever afterwards, when she thought of Dan, she saw with her mental vision the beautiful, speaking face in a transfiguring glow.



**F**ORGOTTEN? Halls of memory keep  
The loved and lost, long sunk in sleep;  
And never yet were they so far,  
No dream could cross Love's harbour bar!





## CHAPTER V.

“Sammy Smegg.”

THE Hallidays parted with McRae with genuine regret. He had always been above his position, and they had made him as one of the family. They knew his place would never be as satisfactorily filled again. But they did not know his loss was to be but the beginning of disaster for them and theirs.

The first time Barbara saw the new book-keeper she shrank from him with such evident repugnance that the man's sallow face flushed with anger. He spoke ingratiatingly, but the expression of his eyes sent her out of the room with an indefinable feeling of fear at her childish heart. He certainly was not prepossessing in appearance, yet hardly deserved Beebo's strongly-expressed description of him as “a big, snarling wolf, Dad!”

His ugly mouth and prominent teeth could never reconcile the beauty-loving child to his looks, and she avoided him on every possible occasion. His name was Smegg—Samuel Smegg—and he was soon invariably spoken of as “Sammy.” He kept closely to the books, and showed great deference to Halliday, with whom he soon got on well,—“Jim's” trustful nature

never failing to look for the best in his employees.

But Mrs. Halliday "kept him in his place," to use her own words. She missed McRae, and was of a loyal nature. Dan's loss, however, was, on the whole, felt most by Barry, who did not find in "Sammy" a kindred spirit. There was something about the man that repelled him—indefinable, yet ever present.

Patsy plodded on as usual, keeping his opinion to himself—only saying, now and again, to Barbara: "Say a prayer for poor Dan, honey; say a prayer for poor Dan,"—which the child religiously did. Only once was Patsy betrayed into saying, "'Tis not a wolf that's in the office, Miss Babo, but a fox!"

As Barbara grew older, she was not without many admiring friends of her own sex, chief among whom was the doctor's daughter—a girl three years older than herself. She was neither as clever nor as good-looking as Beebo, but she had plenty of originality and daring about her, and was duly admired by the more retiring Barbara.

Dreda (short for "Etheldreda") Lane had a strong-willed, almost masculine, personality, and already took a pride in making other girls carry out her projects, and fall in with her views on every subject. She was proud of the fact that she was a professional man's daughter, and insisted upon being allowed to take the lead in

whatever amusements and recreations were organized by those of her own age.

The girls, following the example of a bigger world in such matters, took Dreda at her own valuation, and paid her the homage she demanded, without demur. Her "big notions" amused Halliday, and he liked nothing better than to "take her down a peg," as he called it; still, he did not discourage the intimacy between her and his daughter,—partly for the reason that he and the old doctor were "cronies," and had done each other many a good turn in the earlier days of the diggings.

Mrs. Lane was an aggressive, deep-voiced woman, who dressed loudly and entertained largely—one who was never happy unless she was patronising somebody, or arguing on what she considered the most "up-to-date" question of the day. She spoke of Cherry's Point as "this dull hole," and bemoaned the fact that she was obliged to bring up "Miss Lane" in such a place, where "the poorer class" were "too familiar," and "aped their betters!"

The doctor, on the contrary, was a mild, unassuming individual, with an absent-minded air, and a heart that carried him wherever pain and poverty called. It was said that if Mrs. Lane did not personally see to his books and collect his accounts, he would never have had "a penny to his name."

The doctor loved a pipe and a yarn with Jim Halliday,—and often the two would sit for a couple of hours exchanging reminiscences, or in utter silence, broken by the doctor at the last with some such words as these: “Milk and roses—pure milk, and morning roses—that was Kate’s complexion, Jim! Never saw anything to beat it!”

“And never will,” was the invariable and expected answer.

“Kate,” needless to say, was not Mrs. Lane’s Christian name! The doctor’s Kate had been in her grave many a day, and he had married late in life. With the exception of his son Denzil, his children resembled their mother. Denzil was away at college, studying for his father’s profession.

Cherry’s Point, like all country townships, had its cliques,—formed, of course, by its women-folk. Society was divided into three distinct classes—the first, and highest, consisting of bank managers, doctors, clergymen, wardens, clerks of court, lawyers—and the unprofessional who, even if “unfortunately” obliged to be in trade, had high-born or wealthy connections. Class No. 2 embraced tradesmen in the retail lines, milliners, dressmakers, apprentices, etc. Class No. 3 was made up of miners and labourers, and all who earned their own living by the sweat of their brow. Mining managers came under the heading of Class I., and their relatives were not slow to take advantage of it.

Jim Halliday suffered less from cliquism than most. He not only belonged to the "wholesale," but his wife had "good blood" in her veins. Perhaps, on the latter account, she never suffered the mortification of being either snubbed or ignored by the other 'ladies' of the town, and often had the satisfaction of gathering under her roof at one time, representatives of the three classes—each one of which dared not publicly offend the other, for reasons of policy.

Mrs. Halliday knew how to entertain well, and her dinners and musical evenings were always looked forward to. The wife of the second doctor in the place was not popular, and was credited with being "ower mean," while her husband was looked upon as being "a little wrong in the head," having become addicted to the taking of drugs.

Among the men of all classes, there was that free and easy style of intercourse always to be found in mining centres. They left to their womenkind the classifying, and social treatment of, the individual proper.

The miners' wives—as a rule, an intelligent and capable body of women—resented "cliquism" with all the intensity that is part of a strong and active mental organism, and "paid out" the patronising in a hundred and one little ways, many of which were both clever and amusing. They were not without a humourist among them—a certain Mrs. O'Dea, who, though a miner's

wife, had had "a college education" in her youth, in "the Old Country,"—and was gifted, moreover, with a sarcastic tongue! At election times she shone as the wit of Cherry's Point, and candidates were known to pass her door in fear and trembling, for her voice had a subtle, carrying quality, and she had a word and a joke for all—always managing to make her word-pellets strike the most vulnerable place in the character of her hearers. Elections were momentous events in those days, when nothing was done by halves, and they often ended up in unseemly riots.

THE HEART of a child is a sweet wild rose,  
Petal by petal its leaves uncloze,—  
A touch too hasty, a smile too cold,  
And hidden from sight is its heart of gold!





## CHAPTER VI.

“Androcles and the Lion.”

THE local police-station was a long, narrow building, bearing a remarkable resemblance in shape to a coffin. Later on, Cherry's Point's sergeant of police was to take a prominent part in the arrest of the Kelly Gang, winning one of the chief Government awards.\*

Except after election times, and when a prisoner was brought in from one of the far-out districts, policemen in Cherry's Point had a fairly easy life of it. As a rule, they were a genial, good-looking lot of men, who kept the peace by their own manly and honest virtues as ordinary citizens.

Only one murder stained the prison annals, and the poor victim's grave was distinguished in the hill-cemetery by a cairn of quartz crystal, at which children looked with fear and curiosity, as if expecting to see blood-drops ooze out of the stones. It was whispered among them that “the Melbourne Waxworks had the wicked man on show, with his pick still in his hand.”

Away, beyond the cemetery, was a “leper tent” on a lonely rise; and Seaforth, the master of the hospital, carried to the miserable creature

\* Sergeant Kelly.

within it, with his own hands, every second day, his allowance of food and drink—whistling to him to come out and take it from the spot where he had laid it—and watching to see that the unfortunate creature availed himself of his sustenance. This was the leper's only way of communication with the outer world, as that side of the range was naturally shunned by the people.

In the picturesquely-situated cemetery, Barbara took a great interest, and never tired of going from grave to grave to read the inscriptions on the tombstones. So many were of miners who had been killed, from time to time, at their daily work, that, when the text underneath their names was not, "*In the midst of life we are in death,*" she felt as if there were something wanting in solemnity and appropriateness. On each stone were usually displayed the emblems of the benefit society to which the miner belonged, and whether it were an open hand with a heart on it, keys, or an inverted compass, she never rested till she had discovered the meaning of all. "The Foresters'" emblems were, on the whole, the most in evidence, that Society being then at the height of its popularity. But her inquiring little mind never forced her feet as far as the suicides' allotted portion, nor the Chinamen's—a number of the latter having been laid to rest there by their countrymen, who had "claims" down Rowley's Creek way, or who

were gardeners on the slopes of the Goulburn. The peculiar burial ceremonies of the Chinese were carried out with great exactitude on that quiet hill.

The meaning of the word "suicide" was not clearly defined in Barbara's mental dictionary. All she knew was that it had something to do with "murder," and that these "set-apart" poor creatures had invariably been found dead, "out in the bush, where the trees were high."

Of Chinamen she had a wholesome fear since hearing "a John" who sold fancy goods periodically, tell a neighbour to "drown every one of her little girls,"—"*Lilly girls no good!*"

After Daniel McRae had been gone some months, Barbara made a big effort to write long letters to him at regular intervals; and in this her mother encouraged her, as she thought it a good way of accustoming the little girl to express her thoughts and ideas, and in aiding her to compose long sentences. It was a letter-writing age, and the brief scrawls of the present hour would have been considered positively derogatory to one's dignity to receive!

One of Beebo's letters ran in this wise:—

"Dear, Darling Dan,—I just loved your last letter, and shall keep it for ever and ever. I miss you, dear Dan, more and more and more, and I never, never go near ugly Sammy Smegg in the office, and Dad says I am a stuck-up little heathen!—but Mother doesn't mind at all.

Don't forget to send me that beautiful blue bird you said you would. You asked me to tell you what walks I go, and all about what I see. Well, dear Dan, on Wednesday I went for a long, long walk with Mrs. Hawthorn (the lady-one, whose husband is the bank manager) and her little girl, Hilda, who wears such *pretty* silk dresses.

"It was a lovely day, and Mrs. Hawthorn said we could be "truly rural; for once"—so we took a lot of nice sandwiches with us, and went all the way to Rowley's Creek. The people down there don't like Mrs. Hawthorn much, because she looks down on them; and when we passed Mrs. Ruffy's (the fat vegetable woman at the Bend), she called out names after her, and said: "If the good Lord let His sun rise on the good and bad alike, it wasn't her business (Mrs. Hawthorn's) to walk by people as if they were dirt beneath her feet!" And Mrs. Hawthorn said to me that it was that sort of common, vulgar woman that knitted, and knitted, and knitted, when the French Revolution knocked off people's heads,—but I don't think it was, for I know Mrs. Ruffy sends heaps of eggs that are never stale to sick people in the hospital, all for nothing. And she brings me bunches of flowers to the store.

"But, oh! not long after we passed her place, dear Dan, something happened that was nearly as bad as revolutions! We had eaten our lunch on the pretty track that goes on to the Black

River, and walked on a bit further to improve our minds with the scenery, when, all at once, we saw a queer-looking man, with a face all whiskers down past his waist, and with long hair behind; and he was kneeling down where some foxgloves grew very thick, and calling out loud!

"He had a lot of dogs with him; they were sitting up as quiet as mice, waiting for him, and looked just like the big marble dogs in our hall that Dad thinks such a lot of. Under his arm the man had a big book, like a Bible, all bound in 'possum skin. Hilda was frightened, and ran back a little; Mrs. Hawthorn was as brave as Androcles and the lion, and she went up to him and said, 'What is the matter with you, my poor man?'

"And then he looked up quickly, and made a queer noise in his throat, so I jumped with fright, and he called out to me, 'Come here, Blue-eyes, and I'll show you which shall be on the right hand, and which on the left!'

"I went a little nearer, for his eyes were not fierce; and he pointed to the white foxgloves, all out in bloom, and said, 'These are the good angels, and you shall stand with them for ever and ever!'

"Then he shook his big fist, all hairy as his dogs, at the deep-pink foxgloves, with the black specks, and roared out like a bull, 'These are the demons, the wicked ones of Satan, who fell through pride, and *her* part shall be with them!'

"And he glared and glared, dear Dan, at poor Mrs. Hawthorn, till she was shaking like a fit all over; and she said, 'Oh, Heaven! he is mad!—mad!'—and she caught my hand and began to run. But, dear Dan, her skirts were tied back underneath, like the rest of the ladies, and she could only jump along like a kangaroo!

"The man laughed very hearty, and called out he wasn't 'mad,' and he wouldn't hurt her; but she wouldn't stop. And then he ran after her, and she went so quickly that the skirt-strings burst; so she got away and saved her life, safe and sound.

"When I told Dad, he said the man was only Billy Gunther, the wild man down the Creek, who is so kind to boys when they go out camping for fun; and that he is only a little strange about religion and dogs, and wouldn't hurt a fly, 'much less a woman.'"

"But, dear Dan, Mrs. Hawthorn seems to know more about him, and she says he is 'a minion of the Evil One's,' and 'should be bound for a thousand years.'"

"People told Dad in the store that Mrs. Ruffy laughed till she nearly died, when she heard all about it, and said it was nearly as good as Mrs. Treweek running, crying, into her place one morning, and calling out, 'Oh! oh! father's dead, and the billy-goat's rushed me!'

"So, perhaps, Mrs. Ruffy's great, great great grand-fathers *did* sit and knit, when Billy

Gunther—I mean when the big chopper thing—knocked the grand people's heads off!

"I wrote this long letter in bits, dear Dan, and there is no news since, except that the German chemist kills our pigeons with his air-gun, to make pigeon-pie, and Dad says he will make 'mince-pies' of *him*. And Mrs. Van Hooten has tied all colours of wool to her hens' legs, for fear he will commit suicide on them, too. Even our Patsy says, 'I will shoot his canary, I will, so I will, if he doesn't be after keeping his 'furren' instruments in the land they belong to!'

"So you see, dear Dan, things are in a great muddle since you went away. Dreda Lane says about you and Sammy, that it is 'a case of 'bourgeois' and 'aristocrat' all over again'; and she knows French a lot better than I. But I am trying to be like what you told me about the snow, and I said I would have no 'scandal talked whatever'; and she laughed hard, and said, 'Ciel, chérie!' But I don't know what that means, yet; so I came in very proud and haughty instead, to show her, by word and deed, that I disapproved!

"I only like Dreda a little, but I love *you* very, very much, dear Dan, and you won't forget me ever, will you? I try so hard to be good, to please you when you come back; and Patsy sends his 'best respects,' and hopes you will soon be well. Tom Barry said he was writing to you himself, and that he would like 'to knock Sammy

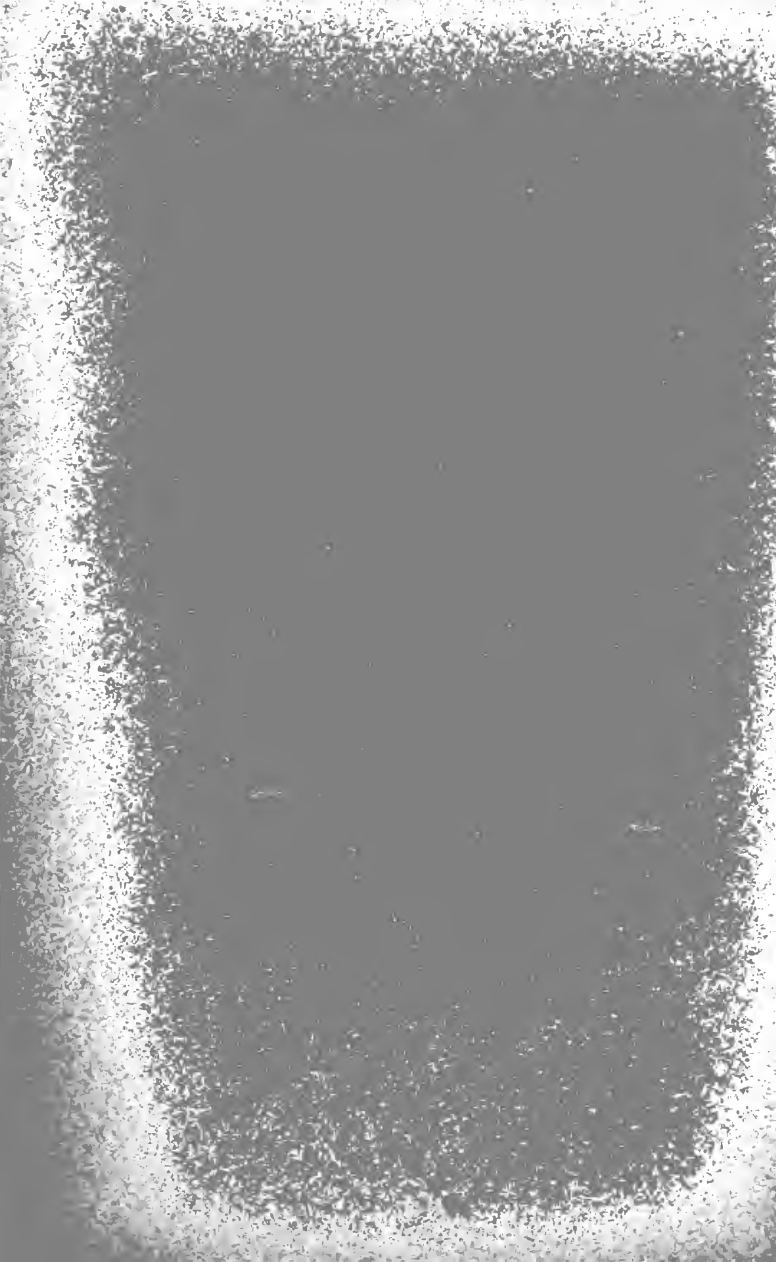
Smegg's head off,' only it was 'too oily to touch with clean hands.' Samny has bottles of scent and pomatum hidden in the office. I found them one day, and he showed his big, yellow teeth at me! Oh, dear Dan, do come back *soon* to your loving little girl.

BARBARA ISMAY HALLIDAY.

Kisses for you.



**A**LL that's false, and mean, and weak,  
Must shrivel in that glow,  
Whose flame arises heavenward  
With all sweet winds that blow!



## CHAPTER VII.

"In the Midst of Life, We are in Death."

**B**ARBARA'S next letter was in a sadder vein, and may show, in its strictly true account, something of the perils and heart-breaking anxieties of mining life in those times when accidents were many—the rule, rather than the exception.

"Dear Darling Dan,—A terrible thing happened since I wrote to you last, and Mother says I can tell you all about it, if I like and don't cry. Dad says he is "too cut up" about poor Dave Boyce, "to use a pen yet"; so I will do my duty to you, dear Dan, instead. On Friday, just after dinner, a man came galloping up to the store to say that Dave Boyce's and Jack Nicholas' claim at Rowley's Creek had fallen in on them, and they were buried beneath all the earth and heavy stones; and men were trying to dig them out—and would more go down, too? So the other men in the mines were let off work; and nearly every man in the place went down there to help. All the women came out of their houses, and talked, and waited for news; and some of them cried that had men killed before. Dad was in a great state, too; for Dave Boyce had once been his storeman, and he liked him. And mother said it was really worse for anything to happen to Dave

than to poor Mr. Nicholas, because Dave had a wife and four little ones. Mother kept saying, "Poor Kitty! Poor Kitty!" all the while. Kitty was our servant once; but, of course, you will remember.

"It seemed a long, long time till night, and no news! Then a man came to Dad, and said they were not dug out yet, and Kitty was nearly mad, and nobody could do anything with her. Dear Dan, she was peeling potatoes, and getting his dinner ready, when the women went with two men to break the news to her. But she kept calling out, "*My* Dave will be safe; *he'll* be safe—because he is so good!", and they couldn't keep her from running to where the crowd of men were digging. And they hadn't got either of them yet. So Dad went very white, and Mother, too; and Mother said, in a soft voice, "I am going down there, Jim; you can come for me afterwards." So they went away, and no more news came for a long time.

"Maria, our girl, kept me with her; and we went out a lot of times, and watched the people going down the 'Deep Cut' with lanterns for the dark road—till it seemed sad and solemn as a funeral. And at last Maria said, "Nobody comes back. Surely the men are not digging yet!" After a while, Patsy came, all covered with mud and pipeclay, and his face was grey, just as if he were sick. Maria caught him by the arm; and, first, he said, "This is no place for the

master's daughter!"—then, "Poor Dave! God rest his soul! A big stone must have struck him, as he ran; and there they found him, with a half-smile on the face of him, as if he saw the angels of Heaven! But poor Nicholas—God be good to him!—'twas the earth falling, choked him!" And the tears ran down Patsy's cheeks, and he went away.

"Maria and I cried for a long while; and then I fell asleep. But I did not forget, dear Dan, to pray for their souls.

"Next day, the poor men's bodies were brought up to the Niagara Hotel—for the inquest, they said. And crowds of people who knew them went there to see them. And Dad said it would do me "more good than harm" to see Dave Boyce's beautiful face, and that I had "too much sense to be afraid." So I went with him; and I was glad, for he looked like Patsy said; and I knew he *did* see the angels, so didn't feel so bad when he was killed. But I felt sorry for the poor lonely dead man that had no wife and children to care for him; and I told Dad, and he said, "Bless my soul, what a queer child you are!"

"But he did not seem to mind when I went gently up to where poor Mr. Nicholas lay, with a white cloth over his face, and put half my flowers for Dave between where his hands joined on his breast. And I knelt and said a prayer for him, too.

"It was a big, big funeral, dear Dan; mother says, "bigger even than you have ever seen here"; and everybody walked two by two all the mile and a half to the cemetery, just like soldiers, only looking so sad and sorrowful. Some men went round and collected a lot of money for poor Mrs. Boyce and the children. But Maria says the poor woman sits moaning all the day, and won't listen to anybody.

"Dear Dan, the beautiful music Mr. Lennon played just before the funeral, nearly broke my heart! But Patsy says a woman's moan breaks *his* heart more than any grand music; and mother says his is "the right sort of heart, and does the most good." But I can't help feeling most to music, dear Dan, and I hope you won't mind, though it seems to make another sort of girl inside me—like a bigger grown-up sister."—Later on she wrote:—"I asked Mr. Lennon to teach me the music he played when poor Dave Boyce was killed; and he said if I could play that, at my age, I would be a 'born genius!'—and he didn't think I was quite that!—though I am getting on so well. I asked him how I would know if I really was 'a genius,' and he said when I could make the violin say "whatever I wanted it to!" So I said, dear Dan, I couldn't be 'a genius,' then—because I can never get anything to say what I feel, at all,—yet that somebody inside me wants to say, oh, ever so much more than anybody knows!

"Mr. Osborne, the schoolmaster of the Common School, was there, and he patted me on the head, and said to Mr. Lennon, 'There is a bird singing in this little woman's heart, I think, my friend; and some day its songs may be heard even farther away than your violin!' (I wonder what he meant, dear Dan?) And Mr. Lennon nodded his head. Then he said, while he started to tune, 'The soul expresses itself best in music. The grand old masters knew that.'

"But Mr. Osborne said, 'The grand old painters, and the grand old poets have a word to say, too!'"

"Mr. Lennon began to play very softly and sweetly, telling me to listen well; so I did, with all my might. And when he had finished he asked me, 'What did that say to you, child? What did you hear?'"

"I said I heard fairies calling in the bush, and their voices were like the running water in the gullies! Then I heard them playing games together; and their laughter was like the sound of the silver bells on Baby Howard's rattle. Then there seemed to be wind rising; and they were very much frightened, for they stopped laughing, —and I heard their tiny feet patter away quickly, then hardly at all, till they stopped altogether! I felt so shaky telling him, dear Dan, but I got out all I thought I heard; and he looked so pleased, and clapped his hands, and said to Mr.

Osborne, 'Right, to the last sound! I call that the soul of a true musician! Eh, eh?'

"But Mr. Osborne said, 'Poetry, my dear sir, poetry!—and I wish to Heaven I had the training of her—not that fool of a woman with her bad French and her doggerel rhymes!'

"I am afraid, dear Dan, he meant my teacher. Dad is always saying I would learn more from Mr. Osborne in a week than from her in a year; but mother says she does not wish me to go to what is called 'the common school,' and I suppose I never will. He stayed till I finished my lesson; and when I was going away, he took a book out of his pocket, and gave it to me.

"Read that often, Barbara," he said; "and when you come to anything you don't understand, always ask me, and I will explain it to you, though you are not one of my scholars."

"It is a lovely book, Dan—even if it has an old cover—and is full of exquisite poetry, which I am learning off by heart, without letting anybody know, except you. I tell you everything! I know you can keep a secret, though I can't 'go round your hand' like the girls do at school! Dreda says it is very vulgar to do things like that, or to play 'jacks'; but I wouldn't mind if she did them, as long as she was kind to dumb animals; and she isn't.

"So I have told her I can't "keep up the acquaintance," if she teases, and beats, her dogs. At that she said I would "make



her die laughing," yet; but I told her cruel people die "with groans and tears for spending a wicked life!"

"She won't read true-life books—so she doesn't know. She likes books about sweethearts and grand people best. Dad says they will be "the ruin of her yet." Mrs. Lane says I am far too old for my age; but mother says it is "in a different way," and she "doesn't mind." Mother takes a lot of pains with my spelling and punctuation, to make up for the private school; and sometimes Tom Barry teaches me a little from your old ledgers, dear Dan. And I don't forget to notice how every plant and flower is made—to keep up all you taught me."

"Sometimes I go for a walk with mother to Raspberry Creek, by the Left-Hand Branch track, and look for ferns in the crevices of the rocks. And, oh, how pretty the tiny rock-basins are,—filled with water as clear as crystal! Sometimes, autumn leaves are floating on them like fairy boats; and sometimes the water flows down in little streams from higher up; and I call these "fairy waterfalls." The raspberry bushes are such a lovely soft green, and their fruit shines like the rubies must have done in the wonderful garden where Aladdin found the lamp!

"There is an old tunnel out there; and, though it is too dark to go away up it, as far as the light can get in, there are the dearest little ferns growing,—and beautiful moss. The moss grows

in and out and round the big pieces of rock that have fallen down; and all of it looks like a pretty suite of fairy furniture, covered with green velvet! I would like to go right in the old tunnels; but mother says no, she shivers all over at the very thought of it! We never go near old shafts—because there are none that are not deep and with a lot of water at the bottom of them. Dad says, “many a tragedy some of them could tell, if they could only speak!”

“ ‘Cranky Bob’ was found down one once; and he has never been able to talk sense again, people say. His back is crooked ever since, and he lives in an old hut, and the miners’ wives give him food. But I suppose you will remember him, dear Dan?

“The Yorkshire woman where we get all our apples, always asks how you are, and says, ‘Baint he better yet?’ And once I nearly said, ‘No, he baint,’ in answer!—which would have been very rude, only that I can’t help talking in my mind the same words people are speaking! You know that Cornishwoman, Mrs Penruddock? She sends Dad so many meat-pasties to the store that, to speak like Patsy, he is ‘fair moithered.’ One was so hard that, when Tom Barry threw it at Sammy for fun, it bounded back like a foot-ball! Dad was at his lunch, so he didn’t know. When Mrs. Penruddock’s boy goes home after school, the other boys shout out

after him, 'Jam-pasties for dinner, Tam!'—for they know no better, dear Dan!

"And they say, 'Pom! pom!' on Saturdays when the Italians come down from Garloch to buy stores—because foreigners sing with a sound like that in any chorus whose words they don't know. I love to hear the Italian diggers singing as they go back home over the hills! It sounds like beautiful church music on an organ. The hills echo it, and then it seems to roll right up to Heaven! Hearing them, I know I shall never be able to sing like that!

"I can sing a lot of songs; but, as Tom says, it is 'not the song, but the singer.' Still, how happy people must feel who can write the songs for grand singers to sing! Even music has to have words sometimes, I see, dear Dan. And, for beautiful music there should be beautiful words. Once, I thought it did not matter. Dr. Lane told mother I think too much about everything, and that is why I am growing so long, and thin, and pale. But I can't help the works inside my head. They go on every day just like the crushing-machines; and, oh, I do love learning all about things! Dreda says she doesn't care about useful knowledge at all. She means to marry a rich young man when she is old enough, and give balls and dances, and have turkeys for dinner every day. She puts her hands in kid gloves every night when she goes

to bed; so that, some day, when the rich young man sees them playing "so lily-white" on the piano, he will know that she is "the right sort of girl to put in his magnificent house full of servants!"

"Maria says people who 'ride the highest horses often have the worst falls,' and that Dreda Lane will 'come a cropper' some day. But I don't see how that can be, for Dreda won't ride any horse that isn't old and quiet; and I can ride even 'Lady Grey,' which won a big race once! Dreda is very handsome; and we can't be everything, and do everything—can we, dear Dan? Your last letter made me cry. I don't know why. You seem farther and farther away from your poor little Beebo; and I have waited such a long, long time for you to come back! Dad has given me a silver frame for your portrait; and I look at it so often every day, and pray God to make you quite well soon. And ever, and ever, and ever, I am always, dear darling Dan, your loving little girl,

"BARBARA ISMAY HALLIDAY."

.....

Poor little Barbara!—she was not to write many more letters to her good friend.

The news of his death came one cold winter's day, when the snow was on the ground, and was

broken gently and tenderly to the true little heart that loved him so well, the child-woman who had never neglected to "lift up her voice for him" night and day by her little white-curtained bed.



**D**EEPER grow the shadows,  
Fate's step comes, still and slow,  
And gone are happy mornings  
Of life's fair long ago!





## CHAPTER VIII.

“The Big Fire,” and its Consequences.

**W**ITHIN a few years after poor McRae's untimely death, Fortune's wheel had reversed for James Halliday.

Samuel Smegg, his bookkeeper and accountant, who had cheated him in innumerable ways to enrich himself, and who had been so cunning in his peculations that his employer never suspected him, had absconded with a large sum of money, managing to get away from the colony before justice could overtake him.

And, a short time afterwards, “the Point” had been swept by a disastrous fire—known for years afterwards as “The Big Fire”—which had had its origin in the carelessness of a lodger in a hotel, and had reduced to ashes the Bank of Victoria, Halliday's Emporium, smaller shops, and several dwelling-houses.

In short, the whole of one side of the main street was a blackened waste. Halliday was the heaviest loser; as the teams had just brought in a season's new goods, and the cases had not even been opened, much less the invoices received!

When all hope was gone of rescuing anything worth having from the all-devouring flames, rising higher still as they reached innumerable

cases of kerosene, Halliday could be seen wandering aimlessly about, deaf to the condolences of the sympathetic crowd—and staring before him with wide, unseeing eyes, and set lips, from which no words came. His many mining speculations had crippled him enough without this last, unlooked-for misfortune!

To Barbara, awakened from sleep by the deafening commotion, and explosion on explosion as the fire reached spirituous liquors, the night of "The Big Fire" was a night of terror and horror; and, for years afterwards, she never saw flames leap upward, but in them seemed her father's white, despairing face. Hopeful as the nature of the man was, he was never the same again.

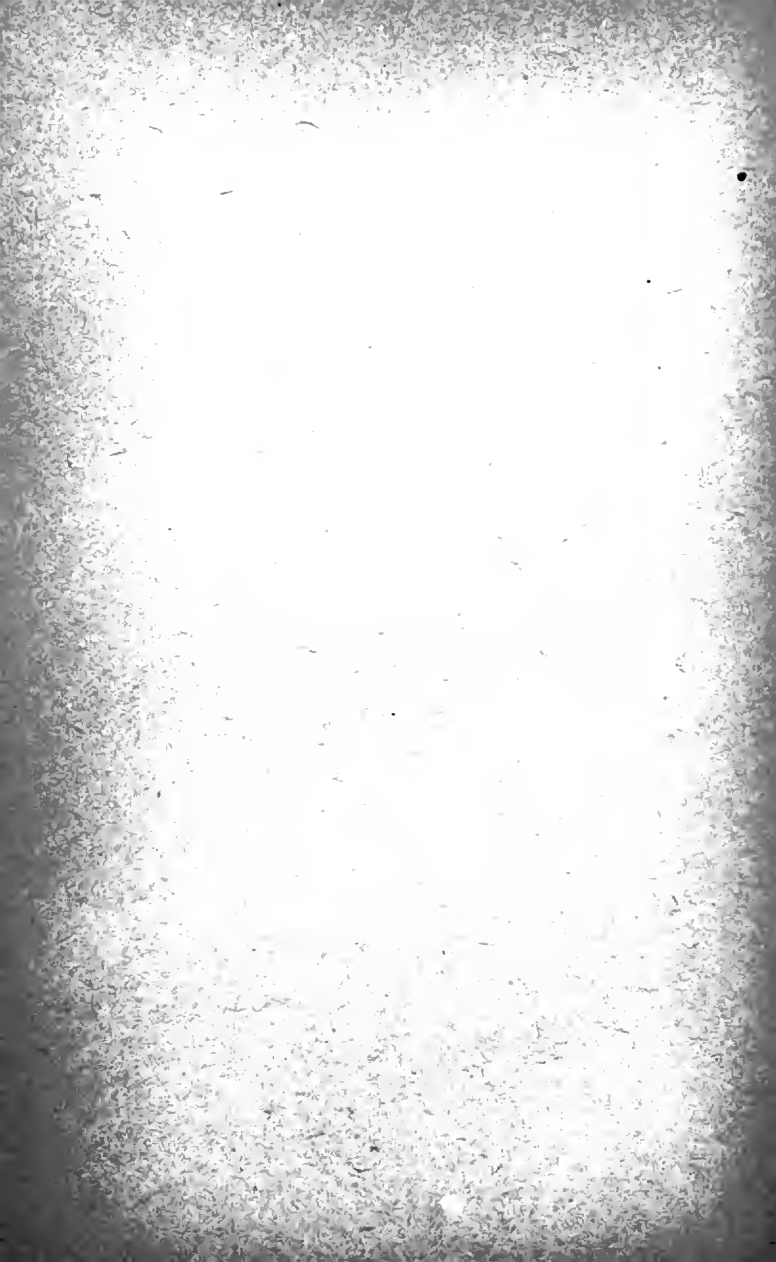
A new store was built, but on a much more modified plan. It was still the largest in the township; but the old glamour and glory lent it by successful early days had departed from it—never to return.

Patsy—faithful, simple, honest-hearted Patsy—always alive to "the master's" joys and sorrows—had come to Halliday in the grey, depressing dawn after the disaster, and thrust into his limp hand the old chamois-leather bag containing all his savings for the years he had toiled for him—the "stocking" which had meant "a trip home to the Old Country"—entreating him, almost on his knees, to take it, and let it be at least "wan drop in the bucket" of his losses;

and he would still "work every finger to the bone" for him—he "would, so he would—by the help of God!"

Halliday was deeply touched by this practical proof of his old servant's devotion; but, needless to say, Patsy's little hoard was left untouched, and he stayed on in "the master's" service for many a long day—eventually leaving for the Green Isle he loved so well.

Barry had been left a legacy some time before, and had gone to his people in Queensland. The other storemen were of the average type, and did not enter into the family's private life.



THE sighing breeze is swaying  
The wattles by the creek—  
O, rippling run of waters,  
What sweet love-words you speak!



## CHAPTER IX.

Denzil Lane.

**M**RS. HALLIDAY, seeing the need to economise, and fearing for the future, (as the mines were beginning to "go down"), did her part in reducing household expenses, and could have been of material help to her husband had he confided all his business troubles to her; but he had been reared in that old school which prided itself in "keeping things from the women-folk," and she could only guess at his pecuniary embarrassments. And, when Mr. Osborne hinted at a Common School education as being the best basis for a boy or girl's ultimate success in life, when a spirit of independence prompts them to earn their own living, she was not slow in giving considerable thought to the suggestion—the result being that Barbara was put under his able tuition, with the understanding that she should be trained for a teacher.

The hope that she would distinguish herself as a musician was still with both parents; but they knew too well that, now, they would not have the means to carry out for her all that was necessary to complete the musical education begun, after all, by one who, though a genius in his way, was not recognised by that world which set itself up as a censor of all that did not come

within its own laws and methods. In her own district, Barbara and her violin were a wonder and a delight. But far-off Melbourne's shrug and frown were other things to contemplate!

Osborne's belief in the young girl's capabilities had not lessened; and, like the earnest, painstaking man he was, he set himself to the task of developing them to the best of his ability.

Barbara herself did not like this first plunge into the arena of preparation for life's duties, as she was very sensitive to either praise or blame, and Mr. Osborne spared neither when deserved, and did not always see that, when the blame followed quickly on the praise, it chilled the enthusiasm which had risen to roseate glow. But—as she always had been—she was quick to seize every opportunity that came in her way for the acquiring of knowledge, and soon grew to be a very satisfactory pupil.

The soul of the girl was developing, and she learned, too, to know herself better,—finding, for one thing, that she was not as free from the weaknesses of ordinary human nature as in her quiet home she had appeared to be; and this discovery gave her much food for reflection, and taught her the necessity for a daily exercise of self-control, and even self-chastisement.

She still worshipped the memory of her dead friend; and, as she was of a deeply-loving nature, it coloured her whole life as a lover's



does the being beloved—her chief hope at that time being the one that she might live a life which would merit the meeting him again in the Haven where she firmly believed he was safely anchored.

To Dreda Lane, this devotion to a dead man of no social standing seemed the height of absurdity; and she had done her utmost to laugh her friend out of it—but with no success.

Dreda had been sent to a fashionable boarding-school in Melbourne “to finish;” and Mrs. Lane talked of persuading the doctor to leave the Point, and practise his profession close enough to the mother-city to enable Dreda to be “properly brought out.”

She was likely to obtain her wish; for the doctor was beginning to feel the first stiffening of the joints that would soon make him unfit for his rough trips over the ranges.

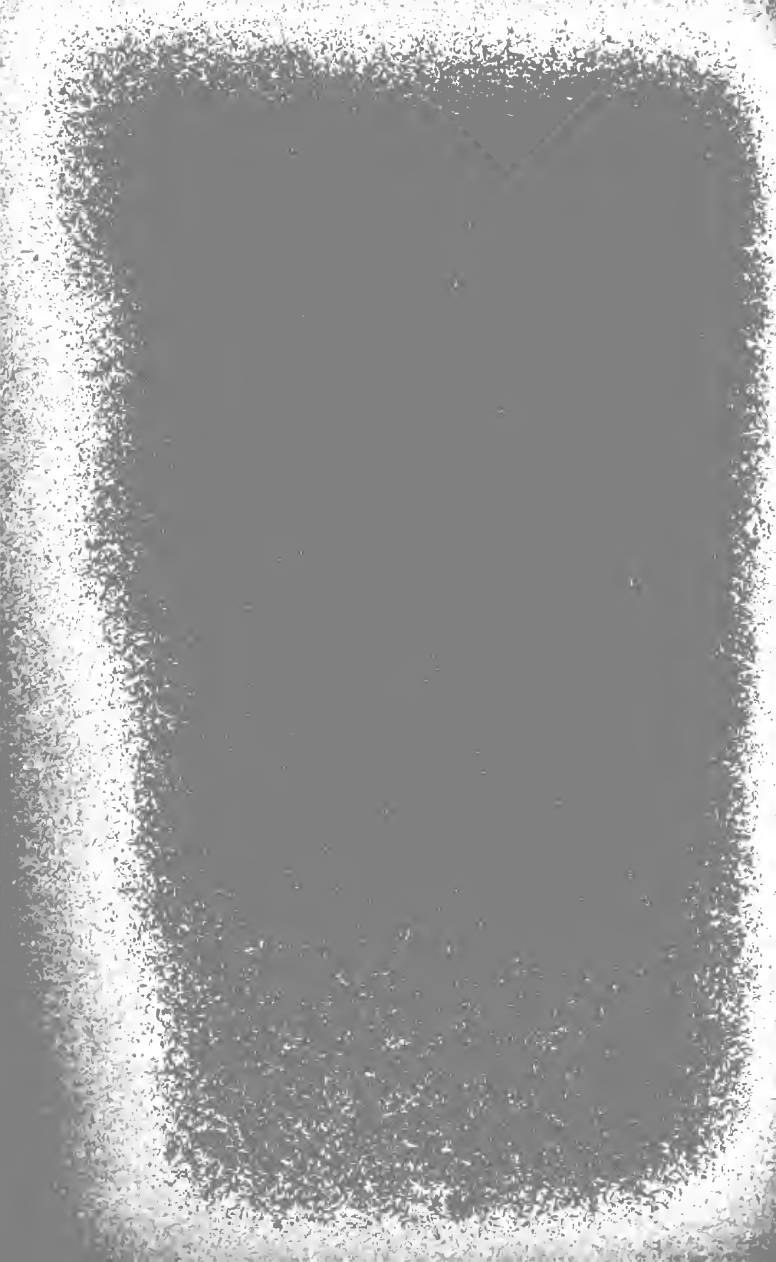
His son, Denzil, usually came up to “the Point” for his annual holiday; and Mrs. Lane, alive to the fact that her son was an attractive youth, and impressionable withal, did not desire that his eyes should rest with favour on any “mountain maid” in particular—much less on one “beneath him in social position.”

Denzil, tall and broad-shouldered, brown-eyed and brown-haired, had irregular but pleasing features, a good set of teeth, and a dark moustache, which he tended with all the tender anxiety peculiar to one of his years. He had none of his sister’s affectations, and, in consequence,

was twice as popular wherever they both went. He knew Barbara as Dreda's friend and companion, but had taken little notice of the quiet, studious girl, unless when a passing interest in her was aroused by his sister's stories of what she called "Beebe's drolleries." But, on his last visit, he had been struck by "something out of the common" in the young girl's appearance, and had given her many an unobtrusive stare when she was not looking in his direction. "Not what I would exactly call a beauty," he had thought; "yet what speaking eyes she has—not eyes of a cold, empty blue, but eyes that lighten or deepen with whatever emotion she feels! I like her mouth, too; there's something sweet and childish about it, yet it is firm enough in its expression to convince one that she could say 'No,' and stick to it! Her nose has just escaped being Roman, and her skin—well, it's the skin one only sees in the ranges!"

Be it said, he knew nothing of his father's one-time partiality for complexions of milk and roses; but Denzil was a lover of all that could come under the heading of beauty, and his eye was, as well, the eye of an analyst. Rouge and powder would never bring Denzil beneath a woman's sway. He had all the vanities of his sex, but the so-called pleasures of city life had not yet sullied his clean young manhood. And he thought he knew a good woman when he saw one.

**F**AREWELL to childhood's rose-lit days,  
Where Hope's resplendent wings  
Shed shimmering radiance every hour  
O'er all created things!



## CHAPTER X.

### "Tags."

**B**ARBARA had liked Denzil as a boy. He was, however, chiefly associated in her mind with horses, guns, and dogs. Of the intellectual part of him she knew no more than what she had heard the old doctor boast of to her father.

It was, therefore, quite a revelation to her when, one day, he engaged her in a lengthy conversation, and she found that their sympathies and interests in many things were identical.

From that hour Denzil lent her books, and gave her many a kindly word of encouragement in her studies, as a brother might have done, had she had one; and she felt a little glow of pride in thinking that he, with all his University training, did not disdain to exchange ideas with one so ignorant of the world as she.

And he often "chanced," during that last vacation, to meet Barbara on her way home, when he would walk down the street by her side as a matter of course, talking to her the while with as much apparent interest as if she were of his own age—greatly to the envy of her older girl friends, who cast many an admiring glance at the good-looking medical student, with the stamp of the city upon him.

Mrs. O'Dea, from her usual corner of vantage on her front verandah, watched the pair one wet afternoon, walking leisurely along the footpath in the pouring rain, under the one umbrella—Denzil having bidden Barbara come under his, instead of opening her own "silly little sunshade," and she smiled shrewdly as she said to herself, "'Tisn't the one gamp only you'll be offered from the same young man very shortly, Miss Barbara Halliday!—or I've got no eyes in my head. 'Twill be a thousand pities if you don't say 'Yes' to his keeping the rain off you all your life!—for, faith, there's no one fitted to do it better."

Even in her style of dress, Barbara pleased young Lane's somewhat fastidious tastes. Her slim young figure was always neatly and appropriately garbed, though her mother no longer ordered her own or her daughter's costume from "town," but enlisted the services of a Mrs. McKinstry—a local dressmaker, who, besides being fairly up to date in "the fashions," was quite a character in her way.

She lived in an old weather-beaten building "across the bridge"—a large, rambling place with a neglected garden in front, and a disreputable back yard behind. It was shabbily furnished, and dirty to malodorousness. Yet Mrs. McKinstry had a certain standing in the township; for was it not well known that her connections in the "old country" were something to be proud of?—and if she *had* married beneath her,

against her parents' wishes, there was no doing away with the fact that “blood will tell,” and when she pleased she could display the manners and the education of “the perfect lady.”

So, if the fowls did wander in and out of the house at will, and the treacle-tin and the jam-pot were as often found on the sofa as in the musty-smelling cupboard, Mrs. McKinstry had “the *elite*” of the town as her “clients” all the same,—though many of the silks and satins that were to be turned into garments of the latest mode did not escape the depredations of Donald's squirts and Alick's liquorice sticks. It took “Tags” half her time to assist her mother in their surreptitious cleaning; and the benzine bottle and the hot iron were often in dangerous proximity.

“Tags” was the only daughter, and had earned her nickname by the number of tapes or strings that usually hung from her thin, half-starved looking body, in all sorts of unexpected places. Her garters were always “odd,” and usually consisted of a piece of old coloured rag, and a thick bit of cord. Her boots were always untied; her hair flew about her face. She had an uncanny, fly-away look at all times and seasons—due, perhaps, to the fact that her early years were spent either in running messages to “match” materials or trimmings, or in hustling dirty young brothers out into the unspeakable back-yard when ladies came to be “fitted.” In her few spare

half-hours, "Tags" was "lazy," and too fond of shilling-shockers in the way of reading to become the light of her appalling home.

Mrs. Duncan McKinstry herself was a tall, stout woman of good appearance, good address, and all the necessary accomplishments of her trade. She had, in addition, the gifts of humour and of sarcasm in a remarkable degree, and could laugh at her own shortcomings, her husband's, and her children's, and turn what another would be heartily ashamed of into a subject for the entertainment of her visitors, whatever their ideas or positions.

Mrs. McKinstry was clever; Mrs. McKinstry was a personality—there were few who did not allow that, however they might draw up their skirts from the greasy floor of her "sitting-room," or feel inclined to rush out into the fresh air after inhaling its poisonous atmosphere. She was the best dressmaker in the place, and "reasonable," too, in her charges—besides, she had been known to mimic to the life anyone who openly showed horror of her domestic surroundings.

Mrs. McKinstry's was not only a costumière's, but a fortune-teller's, and a handy letter-writer's as well. No one could "read the cards," no one could pen a love-letter, or a proposal or rejection of marriage, like Mrs. McKinstry,—and "hold her tongue" about it, too! And there was no "common payment" asked for such favours, either—only an understanding that, when Mrs.



McKinstry looked under the battered old cloak on the mantelpiece afterwards, she would not be disappointed!

Her fame was duly increased by the fact that, in a prominent breach of promise case between a well-known mine-owner of the district and a pretty milliner of the town, the letters produced and read at court produced encomiums from the judge on "the tender, womanly feeling and delicacy of expression" contained therein—said letters being known by the shop-girl's most intimate friends to have been written by Mrs. McKinstry in the privacy of her kitchen, with the aid of an evil-smelling lamp and a fountain pen. "Sweeps" for the Melbourne races were got up by Mrs. McKinstry by the hundreds. "Dunc," otherwise Mr. McKinstry, never failed to give "the straight tip" where a big event was concerned. Liquor and horses—these were Dunc's favourite studies; but a drunken man snoring in a back room is, after all, a mere matter of detail when the fortunes of the many are at stake. And Mrs. McKinstry wasn't averse to having "a glass of English ale" herself.

She never drank to excess, all the same. This was a reasonable excuse for matrons who had "a little weakness" to partake of some refreshment while away from the watchful eye of their lords. Mrs. McKinstry never found it derogatory to her dignity to allow "Tags" to run out as a matter of "obligement" on such occasions,

though she would discourse eloquently on the subject of temperance in the interval.

She "smoothed over" her conscience by allowing Tags to go to Sunday school on Sunday afternoons, from whence were brought edifying books that Grip, the dog, "chawed up" before they could be returned to the library.

This weekly outing was a godsend to "Tags"—baptised Eleanor—as far as appearance was concerned. For that one afternoon, at least, she was rather a nice-looking girl, her face being free from grimy marks, and her hair brushed decently back and plaited into the convenient pig-tail suitable for her years. That her dress—a "left-over" bit from some more prosperous damsel's—was literally pinned together on her, never detracted from the modish effect Mrs. McKinsty's clever fingers could produce at a moment's notice, and it invariably acted as a valuable advertisement for her mother's particular line. Tags usually wound up the day by a visit to the cemetery, reading and re-reading the epitaphs on the tombstones with an interest even keener than Barbara's. There was one that had a special attraction for her:—

"At my sweet age I swallowed a bone,  
Which brought me to my happy home."\*

\* Stawell Cemetery.

"I would not mind how many bones I swallowed," she said ruefully, one day, to little Allan, "if I could only git a 'happy home'! But between you and Alick and Don, and mum and dad and the customers, life aint worth livin'! Mum says she's as good as being one of them French beauties that had a solong (salon), the fuss everybody makes about her; and she don't mind having no proper dinner and a house like a pig-stye,—but I'm that tired I'd like to lay my whole self down under the grass here, and have something nice written over my head for ever!

"Sacred to the memory of Eleanor Joan McKinstry"—it would make me feel like a real toff! There aint no so-longs in Heaven, Allan; and no 'tags', neither."—

"Tags" was a fervent admirer of Barbara; and the latter, though she stayed as brief a time as possible, when going through the ordeal of being fitted for a new dress, never failed to give the poor, neglected girl bright words and sunny smiles, and often took to her an interesting book or a new magazine—knowing that she had no other instruction than what she gathered up for herself.

Barbara was always glad to get away from the dressmaker's flattering tongue, and many a time felt a healthy yearning for a bucket of clean, soapy water and a scrubbing-brush to try its magic on the floor! She had not yet grasped the fact that as long as the artistic instinct in human

nature has enough material at hand on which to feed itself, environment does not matter as much as the world thinks.

Mrs. McKinstry was an artist, a village Worth, first,—and a wife and mother afterwards. As for the teaching faculty, it was not in her. But the young are severe judges!

It was only when Barbara began to teach that she found out how ordinary lives are lived, and to wake up to the fact that the dreaming that does not end in doing, is of very little benefit to the human race. Painfully conscientious in her duties, a little of the shadow of the coming trials of life fell upon her; and it was not long before she left the light-hearted gaiety of her carefully-guarded childhood, behind her for evermore.

O H, love was sweet in the soft Spring weather,  
When we two roamed o'er the hills together!  
Do you remember, love, my love?  
Your laughter rang all the chimes of gladness  
Lark e'er pealed in the first sweet madness  
Of his flight to the blue above!



## CHAPTER XI.

The Journal of Barbara Halliday.

**T**HIS "journal" of Barbara Halliday's—unlike most diaries—had a preface, which ran as follows:—

"Dear Dan,—

If you had been alive, I would always have written you long letters to let you know my experiences, and what I thought and felt. And now that you are gone, and can no longer answer me, I still feel that I want to tell you everything; so I am going to do so in this book—a little, every now and again—and I shall feel happier, and you will perhaps know that I have never forgotten, nor shall ever forget, you. Denzil Lane lent me a beautiful book called "The Journal of Eugenie De Guèrin" (he said it was a classic), and, of course, I would not be so foolish as to try and imitate such a clever woman; but I think reading it put into my head the thought of keeping a sort of diary—which is not a real diary, because I do not mean to date it daily, nor to put in it anything else but things that happen to make me think, and feel, and learn."

B. I. H.—

State School, Wild Cat Creek.

I never knew loneliness of mind and spirit so utterly, so hopelessly, as since I was sent as head teacher (which means no other teacher!) to this little far-back, bush school; but I mean to keep whatever I suffer in that way from my dear father and mother—particularly as dear old Dad's health is breaking from continued worries and business losses. It is my duty to help him all I can; and I shall not need much in this place, where there are weary miles between the houses, and people do not visit each other except when something is wrong.

The family I am boarding with told me plainly when I arrived after an uninteresting and tiring journey, that they did not want me as a lodger,—but they supposed I'd have to be "obliged," as nobody else round about had any room! Yet this is a district that has been agitating for a school for years!

I felt so chilled outwardly and inwardly, that I did not care whether I was turned out into the paddocks with their cattle or not—and perhaps I looked it!—for, when they found I took so lifelessly, whatever they had to say, one of the daughters—a great tall girl like a Grenadier—said to the mother, in a low voice: "She looks the sort that would just go straight back,—and perhaps we wouldn't get one at all then"—a view of the case which assisted in my being provided with a good tea and a fairly comfortable bed; and with these people I am likely to remain as



long as the Department requires my services here as a relieving-teacher.

"The school-house is not a new building 'with quarters,' but an old one which is rented until such time as the average attendance of enough pupils points out the necessity for building a school on approved sanitary lines. It is dreary inside and outside; and I must cover the walls entirely with pictures, or their gloom will get on my nerves and the children's. There is no proper fireplace in it—only an old American stove—and so wide are the cracks between the boards of the walls, that I have twice seen the eyes of passing Indian hawkers staring in while lessons were in progress!

"There are only fifteen children in regular attendance; and, with the exception of two, they are of the heavy, stolid class. Their behaviour is all that can be desired—they are too quiet, if anything,—but that does not mean that they are not observant; for I hear that every little act or word of mine is carried to their parents.

"It is not while I am with the children that that dreadful feeling of nostalgia grips me; it is when they are all gone, and I am returning on my two-mile walk alone,—for none of the pupils come my way.

"You would say, 'Why not get all you can of beauty and Nature's comfort from the walk thus forced upon you?' I *do* try to—and at times I feel comforted and refreshed; for the

scenery here and there is pretty, and the air is very pure and bracing. But, oh, to have to walk in where you know that nobody is particularly pleased to see you—where they are all so busy that, to be a little early, is a crime! Perhaps I am too sensitive, or I have been utterly 'spoiled'; but a cold look hurts—oh, how it hurts! And, though I pay well for my board, somehow I never get rid of the feeling that any of the little services done for me in return are 'a compliment.'

"I never consciously set myself up as being any better than my neighbour; but, oh! that long, ugly, dining-table in the big farmhouse kitchen, where one has to sit and have one's meals with the rough farm-hands, and men who are redolent of the stables!—all coatless, and their shirt-sleeves rolled up above their elbows.

"If you don't join in the conversation, they think you are 'stuck up'; and it isn't as easy to keep the 'happy medium' as it looks!

"Mrs. Bartlett is a big, bustling woman, always making scones; for there never seems to be enough bread—though there is plenty of all else, except fresh meat. The cream and the home-made jams are delicious, and I do full justice to these, when really hungry.

"Home-sickness 'chokes' me most when I sit down to the evening meal; for my thoughts will go 'a travelling' then—in spite of all my wise resolutions; and often enough the light of the

lamp is blurred to my eyes by the tears I would rather die than let fall in front of anyone.

"Waking in the morning, too—no matter how cheerily the magpies are singing outside, or tapping on the roof—and no matter how sweet the breeze is with the scent of flowers, as it comes in the open window—how unutterably miserable one feels at the thought of facing another 'grey' day, and hundreds more like it, away from all one loves! Of course, there are letters to help brighten one up. Mother writes two a week, and tells me all the news. But there isn't much in the way of 'news' since we left the dear old Point! Dad hates city life, and misses his old 'cronies'; though he still has Dr. Lane to 'drop in' and have a chat with him about old times.

"The Lane's are buying Denzil a practice, and Dreda says he is 'succeeding well in his profession,' and that she is engaged to be married to a rich young man,—just as she had said she would be, long ago when we were school-girls! Denzil says her lover has a mouth that 'goes back like the lid of a saucepan,' when he begins to talk, and a cold, fishy hand that gives him 'the shivers; but that he supposes Dreda must think a lot of him, or she wouldn't consent to marry him.

"I have a little secret to tell about Denzil, dear Dan. When the Lanes went to town to live, he started to write letters to me, and mother said I must answer the first two, for

politeness' sake—though I didn't feel that I wanted to.

"Then, after that, Denzil wrote long letters; and dad said they were 'too affectionate altogether,' so I never answered any more. But he sent me his portrait, all the same—a nice large one to put in a frame—and asked for mine. I had sent one of mine to Dreda, and mother said that must do the rest of the family,—so Denzil never got one. We never expected to see him any more in Cherry's Point after his father left; but one day in spring, just before we went away ourselves, I was sitting on one of those big, mossy, grey stones by the running water, reading a book of poems, when I heard the sound of a footstep, and looked up—to see Denzil!—a different sort of Denzil—older-looking, and with his dark eyes shining so brightly, and gladly. And, somehow, instead of rushing up to shake hands with him at once, as I ought to have done, and looking pleased to see him, I suddenly felt so foolish and queer, and never moved—only began to get redder and redder in the cheeks. It was very silly, and he must have thought so; but he sat down on another boulder near us, and just said, 'Barbara, Barbara! Oh, what good fortune to find you here—and alone!'

"I asked him how all his people were, but he didn't seem to hear, only bent forward and took my hand, and wouldn't let it go when I tried, after a little, to gently draw it away.

"Presently he said, 'Barbara, look up at me!'—and I looked straight up into his face, half afraid of his strange manner. Then, in a moment, he was telling me that he couldn't help loving me, that he loved me more than life itself, and that that was why he had come so far to see me again—telling me I must be his wife, and that he would take care of me always, and I need never teach again, or do anything but make him happy!

"But oh, dear Dan, though I wanted so much to feel glad, and proud, and full of excitement, I couldn't; and, at first, I couldn't even find words to answer him. We were both very still for a little while. He watched me, and waited.

"Wild-birds were calling to each other, from tree to tree, and the sound of the water rippling over the stones was like one of Mendelssohn's songs without words; and, oh, the wattle-blossoms smelt so sweet, and it was a glorious day,—but my heart, though it hurt me with its quick beating, was not happy, but sad—sad for dear old Denzil; and I knew somehow that, however much I liked him, it wasn't love!

"So, at last, I told him,—and he begged me over and over again to become engaged to him, and to try to love him as he loved me. And I nearly did promise; for it was very hard to say no to Denzil, and nobody had ever loved me like that before. But, still, something in me (that other girl inside me, perhaps!) kept me from

engaging myself to him; and, next day, he went back to Melbourne.

"Mother was very much disappointed, but dad only said, with a sigh: 'The child has her own life to live,—and it only shows that the right one for her hasn't come along yet. But—I wouldn't have asked better than Dick Lane's son!'

"I went to my room then, and had a good cry; but, all the same, I couldn't change my mind. 'I suppose, later on, Denzil will meet some more sensible girl who will love him in the right way all the days of her life. I never hear anything of him lately; Dreda does not write very often since her engagement. I had hoped that what I said would not interfere with our friendship, as we have known each other from childhood upwards; but men seem different from women in these things; and perhaps he thought I didn't really like him at all. Anyway, I am glad he did not tell Dreda; for she would have been very angry at his asking me to be his wife when he can do so much better for himself 'socially,' as his mother would say.

"Of course I would have loved the dear old Doctor as a father-in-law; but I would not have cared for Mrs. Lane as a mother-in-law! She would never forget to remind me that, in her eyes, I wasn't good enough for her son. So, dear Dan, 'all's well that ends well.'"

DEAR was each sweet wild violet blowing,  
Cherub-fair where the grass was growing,  
Seeking the joy of the sun's caress;  
And down in the gray rocks' hidden places,  
Nodded the delicate flower-faces,  
And the maiden-hair's fairy tress.





## CHAPTER XII.

### Another Leaf in the Diary.

**W**HAT would I not give this day to be in far-off, loved Drury Gully again, where it is so peaceful and so brightly beautiful, with the sunlight glinting on the green of the fern-fronds and the red breasts of the parroquets which, in the stillness, flit joyously from tree to tree; and where the shadows are full of a soft mystery and pensive tenderness, as if they, too, were living things that had a story to tell! I put a leaf in my pocket-Browning, in the place where I was reading when Denzil found me out. And the poem was "A Lover's Quarrel"; and the lines I was reading in it were:—

"Love, if you knew the light  
That your soul casts in my sight,  
How I look to you  
For the pure and true,  
And the beauteous and the right—  
Bear with a moment's spite  
When a mere mote threatens the white!"

"Strange as it may seem, I have never desired to read the rest of the poem since, though I take all my books with me wherever I go. It isn't only Drury Gully I miss, you know, but the climbs up that grand old hill of the 'Evening Star,' from which could be seen such a magnifi-

cent view of the surrounding country, and also the walk to Mount Matlock, where the snow made 'Alps' of the peaks, until they took one's breath away with their statue-like beauty, in the midst of the purple light which is so full of tender glamour in that picturesque district.

"Then there was the stroll, of summer afternoons, along the path by Foley's Creek, where I always seemed just in time to hear the cow-bells ringing, as the cattle came slowly along the opposite paddocks, and where I once—'passing the time of day' with an old woman—was answered with, 'I can't hear a word from your pretty lips, miss—thim dashed bells, they dazzle my ears!' She was all unconscious of the 'bull' she made, poor old soul!

"How I loved to linger a moment at cottage doors, to speak to the dear, bright-faced children and their mothers—good-natured women who often made me take home some small present in the shape of preserves, fruits, or new-laid eggs. As for flowers, I never was without their fragrance around me till I left the dear old place!

"I miss the people as sorely as I do the hills. Mrs. O'Dea's little jokes, and the history of Mrs. Thornley's little ailments, Mrs. Beedale's Yorkshire yarns, and even her neighbour's continual whining about 'hard times'—there was a certain amount of originality about all, compared with those of other country folk with whom I have come in contact since. And every miner's home

had something in it reminiscent of 'the good times' that, alas! for our family, have passed away!

"Prints here and there of the old coaching days,  
Inns that once stood at the parting of ways,  
Hairbreadth escapes over hill and through dale,  
When bushrangers 'stuck up' the Queen's Royal Mail!  
Pictures of horses renowned in their day,  
Huntsmen and hounds in brilliant array,  
Trooper, or mailman, breasting a flood,  
Yarra-track 'bullockies' fast in the mud!"

"And every second man that passed had his history, from 'German Jack,' whose woes caused him to threaten that he 'Vould go out into de woods an' bite mineself mit a snake,' to 'Champagne Charlie,' whose one glory in life was that he had once cleaned the Duke of Edinburgh's boots!—a boast which Mrs. O'Dea somewhat took the glitter off by informing him it 'was easily seen he was no Irishman, or he would have put the boots in his pocket, and never let on he had gone further than brushing the dust off his Highness' belltopper!"

"Ah, well, it's a long good-bye to all!—to the prospector with his dish,—shaking its contents up, to let me see the tiny bits of gold shining so clear in the water; to the battery-man, who was never tired of answering my childish questions about the 'stampers,' or explaining the treatment of the ore; to the far-back diggers, who only came in of a Saturday, and were the most

open-handed, and open-hearted, if the roughest, of the lot; to all the foreigners who loved my violin; to the kind women who showered little parting gifts upon me and mine; and to the sweet-faced, rosy-cheeked children, whom I shall teach no more!

"What would I do in my loneliness, if it were not for my violin and my pen! Sometimes, when my heart seems bursting, I try to make my dear, faithful, musical 'friend' say all that is in it of longing; but I have not the power yet! Poor Johnny Lennon!—the tears ran down his wrinkled face when he bade adieu to me and my little violin, and he told me over and over again that I should have had 'a career.' Perhaps so,—but, if the music be really within, it must 'out,' you know! And, sometimes, I can make my pen sing better! I have another little secret which I shall whisper to you another day—though you have gone so far away from me, beyond the stars! I must leave you now; for I have made a resolve to give my mind more seriously to my daily work, to make a big effort to rise above all that at present weighs me down,—and that will please you most, I know!

"O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:  
And, knowing this is love, and love is duty,  
What further may be sought for, or declared."

THEY know not joy who, for a mess of pottage,  
Surrender for a palace the love-gifts of a cottage.



## CHAPTER XIII.

Dreda Lane to Barbara Halliday.

**M**Y Dearest Beebo,—I have been too busy to write sooner. O, I'm in such a whirl of excitement, my dear child!—trousseau preparations, and all the rest. I'm tired of being fitted for all the lovely gowns that are to be mine when I'm bound up fast with a wedding-ring; and I'm sure the unfortunate costumières, milliners, etc., are sick of the sight of my face. I've made up my mind to have 'real dreams of confections.' It's the chance of a lifetime. You simply *must* come to my wedding; I decline to accept your polite refusal! And if you haven't got a dress you care about wearing on such an eventful occasion, I'll fix you up myself. I just want your calm little face, with its big grave eyes, to keep my head from turning; and, anyway, father insists on my getting you down for a few days from the back blocks. How you can live up in Wild Dog Gully, or whatever you call it, I can't imagine! It would be the death of *me* in a week. But you're certain to be settling down to it, and trying to do all the good you can. I'm afraid I'm not a good young woman; for I adore Melbourne and its theatres, and its café afternoon-teas and suppers, balls, and

other wild extravagances, and can't bear to be reminded by beggars, and blind men in the streets, that there is such a thing as poverty or wretchedness! I'm sure I wish there wasn't,—but it's only for selfish reasons. I have only been guilty of one act of charity since you saw me last—and that is the getting into our service (mother's) to be trained as a housemaid, poor young 'Tags' McKinstry. You wouldn't know her in her neat cap and apron! Mother won't have her called Eleanor; and of course we can't call her 'Tags' (except behind her back); so she is 'Joan' at present—something for you to keep in mind when you are down!

"Mother calls '*Joan!*' in that big, deep voice of her's, like a frog's in a swamp; and poor 'Tags' often jumps as if a gun had gone off, and sends me into fits of laughter; but she is gradually getting used to it. I am to live in Toorak, as you know, and will have heaps of servants and all the luxuries I used to dream of ages ago, when you read your 'Thomas a' Kempis' and I was content with 'Aurora Floyd.' There seems to be something in wishing, after all; and I'm going to wish you here as well!

"Denzil says *he* also hopes you will come. He has grown such a sobersides of late; and I'm afraid he isn't too fond of my betrothed. Mother wishes he would marry, too,—and marry for money. One of the girls I see most of is



much in love with him, and her father is so rich that he doesn't know how much money he has! Denz. has to be civil to her, that's one blessing; and he may get fond of her yet. She's not bad-looking, nor bad-natured, either. Her name is Helen Attwood. She is dying to marry a professional man; and people think Denzil clever. I don't—but a sister's opinions never count! When I'm married, I intend to ask Helen to come and stay with me for a while; and then I may have a chance to bring her and my solemn-looking brother together. The other boys are a bit young yet. I'm sure I'll be a born matchmaker; but, whether I am a success in that line or not, I intend to get all I can out of society. Don't write me any sermons, mind! When I begin to lose my front teeth, and my hair turns grey, I shall set my mind to the doing of good works,—you'll have to be content with that!

'Percy, my husband to be, is worse than I am, I'm afraid. You will meet all the relations, so I shall not waste ink upon their description. I shall only tell you, in secret, that in appearance at least, Percy is not quite the ideal of my 'childish dreams.' But one can't have everything, my dear; and a long purse goes a long way with me—as it ever did! And I'll have the satisfaction of feeling, too, that none of my girl friends will be anxious to lure him away from me. Of course, like the rest of us, he doesn't see himself as others see him, and may be an Adonis

in his own opinion; but, if so, he has the sense to keep it to himself.

"I suppose you are still walking round in 'maiden meditation, fancy-free?' Or, have you a little secret hidden away somewhere in that romantic little heart of yours? I honestly hope you haven't—yet,—for you take life so seriously, it would mean a case of life and death with you, did you fall in love. Needless to say, I have never experienced what poets call 'love!' I don't believe there is such a thing—honestly! Mutual attraction, if you like, similarity of ideas, worldly prospects, etc.,—but nothing so high-flown, or so satisfying, as the emotion of which a Browning or a Tennyson sings! Father says there's 'something wanting' in me; but mother quite agrees with me. She says she never would have married father, had he not been 'a suitable match,' and that he had quite got over 'the silly age' before he proposed to her. Denzil seems to be the only romantic one of our family. When he has time, which isn't too often, he buries his head in somebody's poetical productions of an ill-balanced brain, and all we can get out of him is, 'Eh? What? Humph!'

"Thank goodness, he's never been crossed in love, or we wouldn't be able to live with him! As you know, he'll be a very short time with us now. Redtown is a splendid opening for a young medical man, they say, and he'll be the most up-to-date doctor in it; so his hands will be very

full, and it will only be during his annual holidays, I suppose, that I'll get a chance to do Helen a good turn. He may meet his 'fate' up there—who knows? I'll never forgive him if he presents me with a sister-in-law I can't chum up with! But he's hardly likely to do that.

"Oh, dear, what a long letter I'm writing to you! But you have been in my mind all day, for some reason or other—also memories of the old 'Point.' I'm not a bit sentimental by nature, yet I don't think, whatever the future holds, that I shall ever quite forget 'the spot where I was born,'—though I wasn't much regretted when I left it, I know! I was too good a mimic to be loved! When you come, and we have our last maiden chat, I'll give you each quaint old character in turn, from Rowley's Creek to Picadilly, and from Left Hand Branch to Mountain Home—even if I show you the latest step in dancing at the same time, and the favourite poses of our most popular 'lady on the boards.' If I weren't going to marry Percy Pridhall I should certainly try my fortune behind the footlights!

"Adieu! Shall expect a wire to say you are coming. No excuse taken. Shall send Denzil up for you, all else failing in the way of persuasion. Ever and always your friend, my dear.

ETHELDREDA LANE."



**T**HE heart of a man is a stubborn thing,  
The hands that rule it are hands that cling.  
Purity, patience, and tenderness,  
Can change its follies to boons that bless!—



## CHAPTER XIV.

### A Worldly Marriage.

**B**EFORE she gave a definite answer to this urgent invitation, Barbara had much to consider—firstly, an application for at least three days' "leave," two days of which would really be spent in travelling there and back; secondly, her fare out of a purse anything but full—a lot of money for so short a holiday; thirdly, the wisdom of coming in contact with a man whose offer of marriage she had refused. Perhaps the last consideration was the weightiest—though, at the prospect of seeing him so soon, there was a thrill of delicious excitement in her young blood which sent the blushes into her fair face as if he were once more near, and pleading his cause.

She also felt a girl's natural curiosity to see her friend Dreda's fiance, and form her own opinion of his worth as a man and a husband; and, as Dreda had foreseen, she was filled with horror and uneasiness at the idea of her companion of childhood's happy days making a loveless marriage. Instinct told her that Dreda would love blindly, not wisely, should she ever meet anyone who could reach the hidden depths of her nature and bring her emotions into full play, as also the probability of the young girl's

rebound from worldly pleasures with the disgust and heart-weariness that satiety brings.

Of worldly delights the lonely school-mistress knew nothing, and hence was not prepared to pass judgment on those to whom they appealed, so she did not attempt to express these feelings in so many words, much less to sermonise about them when answering Dreda's letter; but an air of regret emanated from the pages which communicated itself indirectly to the recipient, and caused her to shed a few tears, she hardly knew why,—for Barbara had accepted her invitation, after all, and had written to the Secretary of her Department for the required leave of absence, which she did not think would be refused.

"I'm sure to howl when she does come," Miss Lane said, reflectively. "Somehow these straight-laced girls make one realise that life is not all 'beer and skittles' after all. I hope she doesn't cut me out with Percy at the last moment. That *would* be a catastrophe."

But she smiled as she caught sight of her face in the mirror. Its dark beauty was riper and more captivating to men than that of the delicate rose-leaf type, she thought. Her deep-brown eyes glowed with a sun-kissed warmth, as when light shines on woodland pools after the storm is passed. Barbara's were "Irish" eyes—the blue between black silken lashes that attracts but does not lure, that holds but does not snare,



—and Dreda was not sure yet whether, even as Mrs. Pridhall, she might not wish to use her own charms in the dangerous art of coquetry. She longed to get out of life all that could give it zest; to find out for herself the power of dress, the witchery of “the grand manner.” She studied every little art that tended to make her of account in the world of fashion, and gloried in the fact that Pridhall’s money opened its every gate. There was little of her father in her nature.

Denzil, on the other hand, was handicapped rather heavily with his father’s sensitiveness and reticence, and already was smarting under the effect of the rebuff of the woman he loved, far more even than he had expected to. His sole confidant had been the old Doctor, and he often wondered at the insight into his suffering that his father showed, as well as at the tenderness of sympathy he received whenever the subject was breathed. He had felt gratified in the extreme that the Doctor approved of his choice; for, although the old gentleman and James Halliday were firm friends, he was aware that the pride of the Lane’s ever urged them forward to strengthen their worldly position by every means in their power—more especially by marriage. Dr. Lane’s brothers were all professional men who had married for money or position, or both; and they, with their wives and children, formed a somewhat intolerant crowd—education

alone keeping them from being unbearable in their assumptions of superiority over others less fortunate.

"Even if she refuses you ten times over," the Doctor had said, filling his pipe with great care the while; "stick to the girl you love—and never be such a fool as to make the mistake of putting another in her place. Do you follow me, lad?"

"Yes," said Denzil, slightly mystified all the same at the elder man's earnestness; "of course I do, dad—but you hardly mean to advise celibacy for the rest of my days, I suppose?"

"Better that," said his father with a vehemence altogether unusual in him—"better that than tie yourself to one who has no more power to thrill you to loving tenderness and spiritual exaltation than the ground you stand upon!"

Denzil sighed, in spite of the fact that his ideas perfectly coincided with those of his father,—for the thought of being loved for one's self only, and loved for a lifetime, is very sweet to man as well as to woman.

Dreda lost no time in communicating to her brother the news that Barbara was to be expected as a guest for the wedding.

He flushed darkly, though he asked in the most indifferent of tones, "How long is she going to stay?"

"Oh, just as long as red-tapeism permits—three days at most—and I dare say more than

half of that short time will be spent with her own people. They are the magnet that draws her in reality—not I. Yet I know she would not like to be absent when I'm led to the slaughter!"

"Poor, persecuted lamb!" her brother said scathingly; "of course you are to be sacrificed on the altar of family advancement! But," he added in a milder tone, looking at her searchingly the while; "it's not too late in the day if the 'lamb' wishes to see a hand stretched out to save her. Hang it all, Dreda! why should you want to marry that fellow, anyway? I hate the thought of giving a sister of mine to him, somehow!"

Dreda paled a little, and there was the suspicion of a catch in her breath as she answered flippantly, "Considering *you* won't have the honour of giving me away, but the dear old daddums, I fail to see the point of your boorish remark. Perce Pridhall is quite good enough for me, my boy! Have no fears on that score. And, if I should find out he isn't, in the sweet by and bye,—well, I'll lead him a nice life of it, that's all!"

"A poor consolation for you, though, when all's said and done," Denzil retaliated grimly. "But one might as well try to reason with the moon as expect a woman to take any hint that's for her good." And he took up again the "Lancet" which he had laid aside on her entrance.

Dreda's eyes began to dilate, and her bosom to heave with some sudden, fierce emotion. She made a swift step forward, and laid her hand none too gently on her brother's arm, while she said hoarsely, almost panting for breath:

" 'Hints'? 'Hints'? Yes, always 'hints' from man to woman, even when she is his own flesh and blood—never the plain speaking that alone tells! Keep from me, if you dare, anything you know to Perce Pridhall's detriment,—for, sister or no sister, I'm not the woman to be trifled with!"

Denzil stared at the girl with genuine amazement and pained surprise.

Was this the pouting, wilful child of gaiety and irresponsibility?—this Eastern-looking woman with the flaming black eyes, dilating nostrils, and stormy brows? If so, then he had never known her, and something gripped at his heart-strings; for this creature of passion, what might she not do in an hour of torturing pain?—the mental, spiritual anguish that comes at least once in a lifetime to nine women out of ten? He lifted her hand from his sleeve, and took it firmly in his own.

"Understand me, Dreda, I know nothing—absolutely nothing—to Pridhall's detriment, or I should never dream of keeping such knowledge to myself when the happiness of my sister—my little sister not so long since!—is at stake. But I repeat that, for some reason of the unreason-

able, I cannot help disliking the man—and, what is more, I feel that I never shall like him!”

Dreda drew her hand away, and backed towards the door, but the expression of her face had softened, and her brother heard what seemed a sigh of relief escape from her.

“I am sorry,” she said, mockingly, “that my future husband has failed to win your brotherly love,—but, no doubt, we shall both get over such a calamity! I am surprised that you deign to prepare to be present at the ceremony—”

“If you have much more of that same sort to say, I certainly won’t!” said Denzil. “I don’t envy Pridhall your tongue, anyway.” And, with this parting shot, he went out by the French window on to the lawn, where he stood buried in thought none too pleasant for a time.

“I suppose I should be glad Dreda thinks so much of the brute as to flare up in his defence like that! But, confound it, I’m not. I never could stand a man whose eyes were set too close together. And it’s not only that. He boasts of being a man of the world, and an out-and-out cynic, and has nothing in him to keep him on a straight track—or to guard her, either, for that matter. I don’t put up for being a saint, but I couldn’t talk as I’ve heard Pridhall do among his own sort! As for Barbara—well, I suppose I must ‘face the music.’ If I thought there was the faintest chance of her changing her mind!——”

He went off into such a deep reverie that his

dogs, which had barked round him wildly and joyously, got disgusted at last, and wandered off kitchenwards in search of more solid enjoyment.

**T**HOUGH I stood in the last sunset gold,  
And but one wild bird's wings were a-whirr,—  
As it did in the days that are told,  
My soul at your bidding should stir!





## CHAPTER XV.

### Barbara Meets Anthony Hagelthorne.

**B**ARBARA, in Dreda's dressing-room, was soon transformed by clever fingers into a Barbara that showed less kinship with the hills and streams than with the luxurious surroundings of a city maiden of some social importance.

Her hair had been 'coiffured in the latest fashion,' a dress had been 'built' for her with all the careful attention to detail which goes towards the successful making of individuality of style; and now she stood, 'looking like a picture,' if trembling and blushing, in front of the long mirror towards which her friend's strong young hands had playfully pushed her.

"There's not much of 'Santa Barbara' about you now, thank goodness!" Dreda was saying; "and you've left the mountain maid completely behind you. You'll make many a conquest to-night, my dear, with that lovely natural complexion of yours, and that shining head of hair! Make the best of your time, short as it is, and who knows what good fortune in the shape of an eligible Prince Charming may come your way!"

"I hope he doesn't, or 'it' doesn't," said Barbara, laughing nervously. "It is ordeal enough

for me to be among so many people at once. I won't disgrace you, though, if I can help it. I'll try to imagine I am outside, wandering about under the trees in the garden."

"Trees!" echoed Dreda contemptuously. "I'd rather see a man than a tree any day!"

The Lanes had gathered together all their daughter's unmarried friends and acquaintances the evening after Barbara's arrival in Melbourne, and were entertaining them on a lavish scale in her honour. Barbara felt bewildered when she reached the crowded room, with its blaze of light, and found it was much less easy than she had thought to conduct herself as if but strolling over grassy lawns.

After the first introductions were over, however, she felt more at ease; and Denzil soon sought her out, and took her to a quiet nook half-hidden by tall palms, from whence she could see everything and enjoy the music, yet not be brought into prominence.

Her heart was beating fast, not so much at her being again beside one who was her declared, if rejected, lover, but at what was so entirely new to her in such a fashionable assemblage—admiring glances from eyes which did not scruple to gaze their fill, and gaze again. The homage of the hills had been open enough, but had had chivalrous regard for maidenly modesty; and, instinctively, she felt the difference, and was so rejoiced to be safely ensconced beside an old

friend, that she sent Denzil into the "seventh heaven of delight" by smiling at him several times with bewildering sweetness.

Their conversation was at first general; but, by degrees, there came between it those little pauses so pregnant with past memories that the heart, overladen, has to rid itself of part of its burden by the very words it has resolved never to say again; and Denzil was about to whisper a question he had been longing to ask since he had seen her face once more, when, suddenly, Barbara leaned forward, and, directing her companion's attention to the opposite side of the long room, said excitedly, "Oh, do tell me who that man with the grand head is? See, leaning against the wall over there! I'm sure I've seen him, or his portrait, somewhere, some time or other. What an interesting face he has!—the only man in the room with a really distinguished air."

Chilled—his heart-words effectually silenced—Denzil followed the girl's gaze across, and saw between the banked-up masses of foliage artistic hands had contrived, the head and shoulders of a tall man thrown into strong relief against the delicately-tinted wall, and he frowned as he himself confessed that the stranger's face was rather a striking one. The shape of the head was noble; and the close-clipped hair that crowned it, though crisp and curly, did not give its owner a foppish appearance, but rather added to the beauty of

the finely-cut, regular features beneath. The brow was both broad and lofty, and of a singular whiteness. The eyes were large and full and bright, and seemed to be surveying the animated company with mingled interest and amusement.

"I don't know who he is, I'm sure," said Denzil. "He may be a friend of Pridhall's, but he doesn't look his style."

He mused for a moment.

"I have located him, I believe! The Dad did say something about trying to get Hagelthorne, the noted scientist, here this evening. He is a great globe-trotter; has made a wonderful name for himself with his latest discoveries, and is expected to do wonders yet. You have read of him often enough, I daresay, and most likely have seen his photo. in the English magazines. I am certain it is he; but, somehow, I had expected him to be undersized, stooped, and short-sighted—brains and physical beauty so rarely go together, you know."

While he was speaking, his eyes never left Barbara's face, and, if she had looked in his direction she would have seen that they were as full of pain as she had seen them once before. But her own eyes were on the stranger's face that so much attracted her youthful fancy, and Denzil knew he might as well be the proverbial stick in the wood beside her while she had something in front of her to satisfy the artistic and

romantic sense which formed so large a part of her personality.

"I thought he must be clever, with that head, and that peculiar look of superiority about the face which marks him out from the rest," she murmured. "Of course I have read all about him. Just fancy his being here in the flesh to-night! I didn't even know he was on his way to Melbourne. I don't suppose I shall have a chance of hearing him speak,—he is sure to be lionised as soon as found out."

"Of course you will!" Denzil answered irritably. "The Dad's looking for me now, I daresay. I'll see that you are introduced to him, and all that. I thought you were the shyest girl living, though, and ——"

"So I am, in a way," Barbara said, with a little laugh; "and I feel quite scared at the thought of his speaking to me at all; but, you see, Denzil, it is not every day one has the chance to meet a man really worth knowing."

"I must say your remark is scarcely flattering to the rest of us! Pray don't make the slightest attempt to apologise, for I won't listen to a word of it! Tell me, instead, you solemn child, what you call 'a man worth knowing'!"

"He must have brains, of course," the girl said, with no intention of appearing priggish; "and he must put his brains to some use for the benefit of the world at large. If he does that with all his might and main, it follows naturally

that his influence must be a power for good with everybody he comes in contact with."

"That last opinion of yours, Beebo, shows how little—how very little—you know of this wicked world of ours! Such a man, with all his attainments, and 'all his honours thick upon him,' could be, morally speaking, utterly worthless at the core! When you look for real goodness, you won't have to search much further than a common, everyday old man or woman. But we're not in church, and I daresay the gentleman chiefly in question is all that can be desired. Ah, here comes my father now!"

The rest of the evening was full of excitement and enjoyment for the country girl.

Dreda had insisted on her first accompanying a friend at the piano, with her violin, and then entertaining those who lingered by—fascinated with the delicacy of her touch—with some of the really good classical music she had 'at her fingers' ends.'

Self-consciousness vanished as Barbara bent her mind to what was ever a pure delight; and she and her instrument soon became as one—forming a picture never to be forgotten, even by the man of the world who thought Australian entertainments 'an unmitigated bore.'

Barbara was slender and graceful, and her wrists and hands were beautifully formed; and the young, eager face—alive enough now!—with its wild-rose colouring and pearly whiteness of

chin, looked, with the added light of sparkling blue eyes whose expression changed with the changing music, like that of some improvvisatrice divinely inspired.

When she had concluded, the first words of praise that fell on her ears with flattering distinctness were from Anthony Hagelthorne; and, for the next half-hour, he engaged her in conversation which seemed to her as much above her ordinary life as the stars are above the earth earthy. He was not only a lover of music, but could discourse eloquently upon the art when he pleased. Truth to tell, it was a case of mutual attraction. Neither was to forget that meeting in after life.

To say that Denzil was "jealous," poorly expressed the young doctor's state of mind. Want of confidence in his own powers had always been his drawback. For the remainder of Barbara's visit he was as little in evidence as possible; and the girl went back to her lonely bush school, pleased indeed with her experience, but a little sore at heart that Denzil had, after their first meeting, shown little or no interest in her.

"He only fancied that he cared for me, after all," she thought. "Of course it doesn't matter in the least, but—I did hope we could still be good friends!"

**B**ACK to the air, whose glorious scents,  
The grand old hills distil,  
With power above all Araby,  
Life's jasper jar to fill!



## CHAPTER XVI.

“Old Jock.”

**D**REDA'S wedding had passed off successfully, and the “happy pair” had gone to Japan for their honeymoon.

Barbara agreed with Denzil that there was nothing very likeable about his sister's husband. To her, his face was repulsive, and the sight of his leering little eyes, when first seen, had made her give an involuntary shiver.

Pridhall had insisted on Barbara's accepting one of the brooches made to his design for his wife's bridesmaids—a coiled snake with diamond eyes; and whenever it came within the girl's range of vision, she shuddered at what her vivid imagination pronounced a likeness to the donor's eyes, in the diamond's cold glitter.

It was a different Barbara who had returned to the monotony of school life—a restless Barbara, craving she knew not what.

There was no longing for ‘the flesh pots of Egypt’ in her soul; but a craving was growing within her for a wider field for the exercise of her talents. It did not cause her to neglect her duty to the children—rather it made her more sympathetic with their little woes and pleasures; but she was conscious of a great want somewhere which her parents' pride and affection could not

fill. And, in quiet hours, she was more of a "dreamer" than ever.

She made a few entries in her journal at this time:—

Dear Friend of my Childhood,—

"I have been away for a few delightful days, and have seen the dear Dad and Mother—once again to be clasped in their arms, and to be given fresh encouragement in my work. And I have been to poor Dreda's wedding—yes, 'poor' Dreda,—for I am sure she will not be happy with the queer-looking man she married. But it was a very pretty wedding, nevertheless. Dreda looked beautiful as a bride—really queenly in her lovely white silk robe with the Carrickmacross veil that was Mother's wedding present,—and her wreath of orange blossoms. But her face was very pale—even her lips were white—when the solemn words were pronounced which made her a wife; so I know she must have felt it all very much, though she said she didn't,—for her cheeks usually have such a rich, warm colour.

"At the wedding breakfast, which was the most elaborate affair I've seen in my life, she was the gayest of the gay; but, when I was assisting her to put on her travelling dress, she asked to be alone with her 'childhood's comrade' for a few moments; and then—oh, dear Dan, I felt it so much!—she just laid her head against my breast, and wept so bitterly: she would not tell me why.

"Afterwards, it was all a rush; and I saw the last of her amid showers of rice and rose leaves. Denzil stood very still, and looked very white. Somehow, I think he was ill-pleased at Dreda's choice! And I am afraid he is not pleased with me, either; for he kept out of my way quite pointedly, in spite of Dreda's entreaty that he would find a new sister in me when she left. The others were all very kind; and it was at their house I met Mr. Anthony Hagelthorne, the noted English scientist—a man with the most fascinating face and manner that I have ever met with. I had the privilege of talking with him two or three times, and he seemed much interested in what I told him of Victoria's inland places. He said he would try to have 'a run' through the mountainous parts, if only to see that peculiar geological formation in the middle of the main street at Cherry's Point—where the chief hotel is built. I long to hear that he has gone there—if only for the memory that such a distinguished man looked at the same dear old scenes, and perhaps admired them nearly as much, as we! Since meeting Mr. Hagelthorne, I have felt such a longing to travel,—to see something of the wonderful places he told me about. He says no one has any education worthy of the name who has not travelled widely and observed human nature in all its aspects; that it narrows the mental vision to stay in one place always, and that environment has far more power than

heredity. But don't think that I am altogether discontented with my lot, dear Dan. I am beginning to find that, as far as this little part of my native land is concerned, I was too hasty in my first judgment. Now that the people know me better, they are kinder, and I am getting more accustomed to their ways—though I have not yet found a congenial spirit among them. Their lives, poor souls, are so filled up with work that they have no time to spare for reading. When the womenfolk are not doing household tasks, their fingers are still busy—sewing, knitting, or darning.

“I often ride to school now. I tried to hire a horse, but found the parents preferred lending me one in turn—or perhaps their good nature forbade my going to the expense of keeping one. Anyway, nothing appears to please them more than to see I am a good horsewoman. My capabilities in that direction were sorely tested a few evenings ago! I give lessons on the violin to one of the farmers' daughters a few miles from here; and, to do so, usually go there after school, either riding or walking the distance,—a narrow track through the bush leading to it for about two miles.

“Well, the father, who is a Yorkshireman of the roughest sort, and commonly known as ‘Old Jock,’ had been to the township; and, returning the worse of drink, he overtook me on the road just after I had started. I was riding a horse I knew

little of, and he was mounted on one of racing breed, of the name of 'Old Girl.' My steed rejoiced in the euphonious name of 'Bottle-O,' and looked a quiet beast enough, till suddenly 'Jock' gave it a cut of his whip, and shouted, "My horse against Rob Rackham's any day!"—yelling to his own, 'Go it, Old Girl!'

"Old Girl obediently flew off like the wind, and Bottle-O, to my horror, gave a whinny of delight, and sped after her at the same breakneck pace. On we went, grazing trees—at least, my arm did—as we raced up and down the heights and hollows—hard as I tried to pull my horse in. In other words, he had 'bolted'; and, had I not been used to the saddle from my childhood, nothing would have saved me from a broken neck. The homestead was at the foot of a hill by the river. If 'Bottle-O' didn't give in before we started to go down, I knew a violent death must be my luckless portion, so prayed fervently that my companion would come to his senses and a full stop at the same time; but he gave another wild whoop and disappeared over the rise.

"In desperation, I managed to free myself from my stirrup. Another minute, and I was thrown on the soft grass at the side of the road; and my noble charger was 'in at the finish'—minus his jockey!

"I was not hurt, only a bit shaken, and soon scrambled to my feet again. I heard a woman's piercing scream as I did so, and my blood turned

cold in my veins; for I quite expected that poor reckless 'Old Jock' was a mangled heap at the bottom of the hill,—and perhaps the horses, too, for the ground was very stony. It was dusk, and everything round about looked funereal. Then I heard the sound of more voices; so I hastened, still shivering, to make the descent.

"The lights were streaming brightly from the open door and windows of the house, and, though there seemed to be a commotion, the two horses could plainly be seen, with Jock's son holding their reins. There was no evidence of a tragedy—only two women's figures running up the hill, followed by little Tom with a lantern. I had the sense to give a reassuring coo-ee, and at once heard the grateful cry, 'Thank God! the girl's all right!'

"By the time Mrs. Jock had finished giving her irresponsible husband a sound rating, and the boys had bundled him off to bed, I was quite myself again. The comical part of it is, that Old Jock is inordinately proud of the fact that I was not killed, and backs me up in everything I do ever since. He signed the pledge next day."

**O** PERFUMED breath, whose kiss leaves nought  
Of feverish desire,  
Thou art the priestess of the woods,  
Who kindles holy fire!





## CHAPTER XVII.

### “Foxy Sam’s Wife.”

THE district inspector’s half-yearly visit is soon due, and I shall be glad when it is over. There is ‘a local inspector’ here—an ugly old woman—and fiercer than she looks!—who, every morning as I pass to open the school for the day, ostentatiously takes out a man’s big silver watch from between the leather belt around her waist and a soiled blouse, and looks at the time. She tells the children she will report me to ‘the proper authorities,’ should I ever be behindhand, and questions them at every opportunity, to know the routine of the day. I asked what her history was, and was given the interesting information that she was ‘an old lag’ who had married another of that ilk, and he was now in prison for stealing his neighbour’s sheep. So our would-be censors are not always the martyrs to duty one would expect!

“Only for a little secret which I promised to tell you, people like ‘Foxy Sam’s’ wife would annoy or irritate me. But my mind is up ‘in the clouds’ so often, that I don’t take much notice of the little grievances of life. Dear, for a long time my thoughts have run into verse. Any-

thing I feel deeply, sets 'a little bird' lilting in my brain. And, oh, the pleasure of it!—the joy there is in expressing it! I could never, never make you understand, even if I wrote a book about it! Nobody knows but you, and nobody shall know unless—unless—well, some day I may be willing to tell anyone I get to care for very much. I wonder if I shall ever love anybody with all my heart and soul like Elizabeth Barrett loved Robert Browning, with "the new life springing from the old as green shoots push above the mould?" I often sit on the hillside on quiet Saturday afternoons, and wonder where, and with what manner of man, my lot shall be cast. I don't think I am neat enough and particular enough to make an exemplary old maid! But I feel that I could make a home bright and happy as long as there was plenty of love within it—if God wills. I wrote these lines the other day, sitting under a tall gum-tree, and thinking of the only opera I have ever seen. It, and my fancies, wove it between them!

He ne'er may come—the prince of all my dreams,  
The Lohengrin I wait for through the years;  
His silver armour in some weird land gleams,  
Where never fell the rain of women's tears!

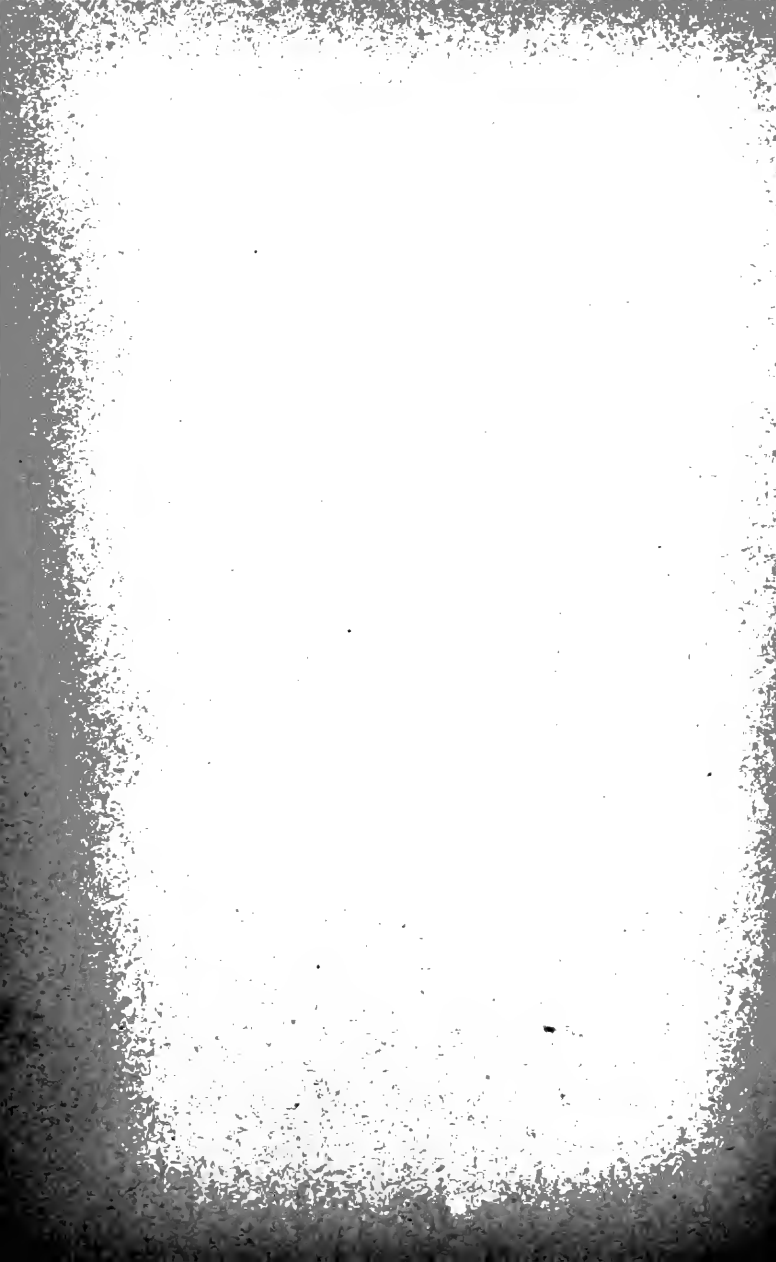
He ne'er may come—yet must I love the more  
The mystic being heart and spirit call,  
Whose answering voice I hear on hill and shore  
In glad spring days, and at sad autumn fall.

He is not false, the lover of my dreams,  
 True are his eyes, with tender light ashine;  
 But where the reeds bend over silent streams,  
 He tarries yet, enwrapt in things divine!

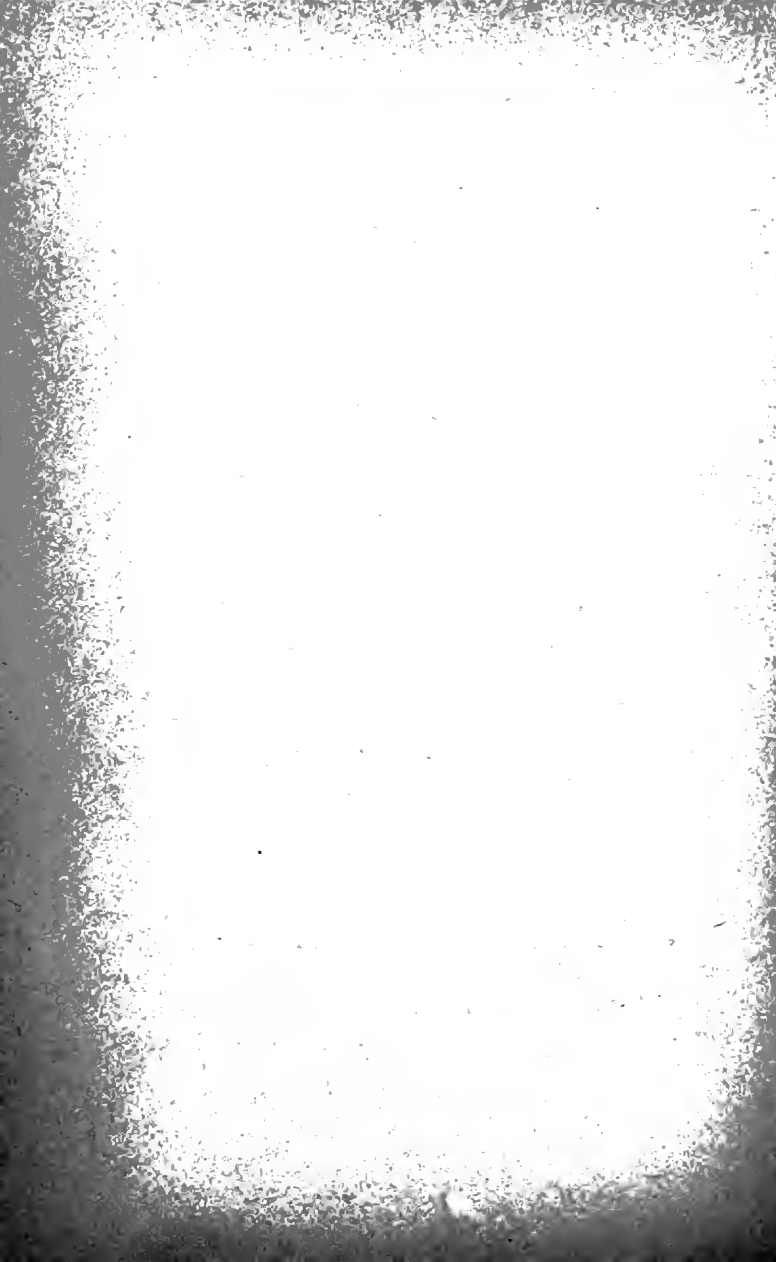
And loud rings out the challenge of my foe—  
 Love’s enemy the world hath ever been;  
 Sweet Time! doth yet a gallant boatman row  
 Over thy waves, the grassy banks between?

When comes my knight, no more I’ll fear the dark,  
 Where lurk the cares that wring the heart in twain:  
 Speed on, O Time! the fair and swan-like bark  
 That brings my love, whom Love shall bid remain!

“Sometimes of late the ‘boatman’s’ dim face takes shape; and then my heart throbs, and the sun shines more brightly, and the wildbird’s song and far-off call seem doubly sweet; and the rustling leaves of the trees whisper of wonderful things that may be—and I am glad, so glad, that I could sing for joy! Then I suddenly remember that, after all, I am only a backblocks school-teacher, whose life is likely to be humdrum and commonplace to sordidness; and the world grows bleak and cheerless again.”



**I** NTO the lake of her soul—  
The soul of a girl—  
What have thy man's fingers dropped?  
A stone, or a pearl?



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### Transportation to the Mallee.

**B**ARBARA'S next entry in her journal is dated three months later, and headed, "State School, Dumgarra":

"I am far away at the other end of Victoria, on the fringe of the mallee, and close beside the Wimmera River. The permanent teacher in charge of the other school returned to duty on recovery from his illness. Strange to say, I was half-sorry to leave 'the Creek' when the time came! I had a sort of presentiment that I could be worse off, which the dreary journey hitherward soon confirmed! It was interesting at first to see an entire change of country; but, leaving Horsham in a trap driven by an unknown individual, and plunging into an utterly unknown district, did not tend to brighten my spirits, tired as I was, after coming so many miles already. For part of the way the houses were of the ordinary wooden type; but, after a while, they became more scattered; and then I noticed that we were passing what looked like habitations built of mud. There were little children in front of each—all with a finger stuck in their mouths, and so silent that they were as depressing-looking as the outside appearance of their homes. I said to the driver—a silent

person, too!—"Surely these houses are not made of mud?"

"He laughed, and said, 'You mean wattle-and-dab, miss,' and condescended to explain the meaning of the term—telling me they were comfortable enough inside, and that I should probably be housed in one, as there was "nothing else in Dumgarra," which was yet many miles away,—but that he thought the walls might be papered in some of the rooms, and the floors boarded, with the exception of the kitchen, whose floor was of earth, as a general rule.

"And he was right. Here I am, in a house of 'wattle-and-dab,' of six rooms, set in the middle of a large wheat-field, and with no view to speak of, and a dusty road of a mile and a half to traverse daily to and from school. The 'front room' and 'best bed-room' are papered; but my tiny bedroom is bare of anything to enliven the eye—or was, rather, for I have every bit of it covered with pictures and portraits now, and am more reconciled. I have a comfortable bed, and meals are more varied in quality and greater in quantity than at the Creek, the reason perhaps being that the father of the household is a Frenchman.

"As I get a perfectly-cooked omelette on Fridays, I have come to the conclusion that he attends to culinary affairs in person whenever I am not about. He is a picturesque-looking old gentleman of a superior type, and has all the



politeness which we read of as peculiar to his nation. I was not surprised to hear from his wife that he was the son of a French officer of distinction, and had come out here to avoid being pressed into the army. Of course, he came when the gold fever was at its height, intending to make his fortune—instead of which, he fell in love with the pretty daughter of a Scotch store-keeper, married young, and had to struggle for an existence in all manner of ways, just as commoner people have to do every day. His sons are grown-up, and are away earning their living. I took to the old man as soon as I first set eyes on his benevolent face, and the liking seems mutual. Every morning when I go in to my solitary breakfast—he and his wife have theirs very early—I find a posy on my plate—a few flowers and leaves tied together with a blade of grass. It is a pretty custom, and does me much good; for, often when I rise, I feel as if my heart were of lead, and that I cannot face the work of each joyless day again; but the flowers rebuke me with their beautiful little faces, that are always sweet and calm, whatever obscure part of the little garden they are in; and I set out on the road to school with a renewed courage, hope, and patience.

“On a Saturday, the quiet old horse, Pierrot, is put in the trap—a worn-out buggy—and I go in with Mr. Lecœur to the township, distant fourteen miles! Sandy soil under us, pine-trees

beside us (a scraggy, unlovely sort of pine), we jog on, and he points out to me small farms and wheat-fields, and gives me the histories of their owners. Most of the settlers are German; so, true to national antipathy, he does not make friends of any. A mile or two before we enter the town there is a lake whose water is not so clear as the name would lead one to imagine, but which has a mountain peak rising sheer out of the centre of it—an object always of great interest to me, and which I am sure would be to Mr. Hagelthorne could he see it.

“I met Mr. Hagelthorne again, dear Dan! Travelling about the country, he passed through ‘the Creek,’ and called to see me. Oh, what a delightful hour we spent together! It seemed all too short—to me—but he has written to me regularly ever since, and has sent me books and papers. He says he is more interested in Australia and its people than he expected to be, and is prolonging his stay. In the larger towns he has been treated royally; and I have several cuttings from Melbourne papers in which he is eulogised. His discoveries in a scientific way have placed him in the front rank, and he hopes to throw new light on kindred subjects before long. I feel that it is a great, a very great, privilege, to be in correspondence with a man so intellectually above his kind; and many and many a letter that I send in answer to his has been re-written dozens of times before being

consigned to the mail-bag. Only for letters—and they only come thrice a week—life in these spots would be intolerable for anyone with the blood of youth in their veins! It is the only communication with the outer world that one has.”



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**L**OVE smiled out from the purple mountains,  
Love called out from the hillside fountains,  
And we walked in Elysium—side by side.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### Pink Everlastings.

I READ A. H.'s letters (did I tell you his name is Anthony?) over and over, as I walk back from school to Lecœur's. Just now, after the rain, there are small dams of water by way of the short-cut that takes off half a mile, and beside them are growing wild sweet-peas—not the climbing pea; but ones of a sturdier sort, of a heliotrope colour,—so I linger there a little and imagine I am in a fairer country beyond the sea, and that he is talking to me! Sometimes a bird flies down for a drink, and I keep very still, and find great pleasure in watching it—wishing I, too, had wings!

“I go for a walk on Saturdays into the bush, and there gather pink everlastings—a wild flower, whose blossom is much larger than our Cherry's Point white everlasting—and these I press in a book, and—often enclose one in his letters! They are such a deep pink, he could not but notice the beauty of their colour. Remarking upon it in his last letter, he says, ‘It is as if the goddess of love had lifted a white everlasting to her lips and kissed it, and the pressure of her beautiful lips upon it, their warmth and life, had given it colour.’ Now, in my own mind, I call the flower, ‘the kiss of Love!’

"On the other side of the river are sandhills, and mallee scrub, and even salt lakes. Mr. Lecœur drove me down to some friends of his who have a boat, and we went across. I can understand why men could make mistakes in imagining houses and buildings, hills and lakes of every kind, in the distance where those hills are; for I found a great difficulty in believing that there wasn't a small township ahead of me, after we had gone a considerable way. The old gentleman said he would like to prove how far out in my calculations I was; but that if we went further on we might get lost—and that is a calamity in such country! So we left the hard, dry-looking bushes and the deceitful sandbanks behind, and 'made tracks' for the river.

"The Wimmera is a beautiful stream; and here and there upon its ample breast are pretty little islands covered with green vegetation and tall reeds. Children cross it in the shallower parts in roughly-made boats to go to my school; but I dread the coming and going for them, as in the winter time the river is always in flood. They laugh at my terror for them, and assure me they have 'great fun' while on the dangerous transit. Even when they reach the land, they have a considerable distance to walk. The boys here are self-reliant and sturdy; the girls, little women—looking forward to nothing better than the same drudgery which is the lot of their mothers. They are more cheerful than the



children of 'the Creek,' and I feel better for the sound of voices singing, as they march contentedly along to school in the mornings. There should be the making of good citizens in this Wimmera district."



LIFT up the lid! Faint fragrance lingers yet,  
From one sweet flow'r, still called "Lost-  
love's-regret!"



## CHAPTER XX.

“Rose.”

ON Sundays, as it is only occasionally I get the opportunity of going to church, it is so far away, I take my prayer-book and walk off to my favourite tree, some distance from the house. Its branches are wide-spreading; and there is a centre-one which is bent, and very suitable for a seat. There I perch myself, and spend an hour with heavenly things. I call the spot of contemplation ‘St. Barbara’s,’ and am nearer to you there, dear Dan, than anywhere else; for, often, the songs of angels seem in the birds’ voices, and my soul rises above time and place, worries, disappointments, and loneliness!

“On Sunday afternoons it makes the tears come into my eyes to see the dear old couple I am with, sitting together on the sofa by the window—the sunlight gleaming on their snow-white hair—reading in turn (from a little, worn, devotional French book of the father’s) whatever is common to each in their different faiths—he reading slowly, and translating into English, as he goes, the beautiful thoughts of an inspired countryman; and she stumbling along from word to word, trying to please him by gathering its sense, and looking up to him now and again with

a light of love on her patient face that transfigures it to beauty.

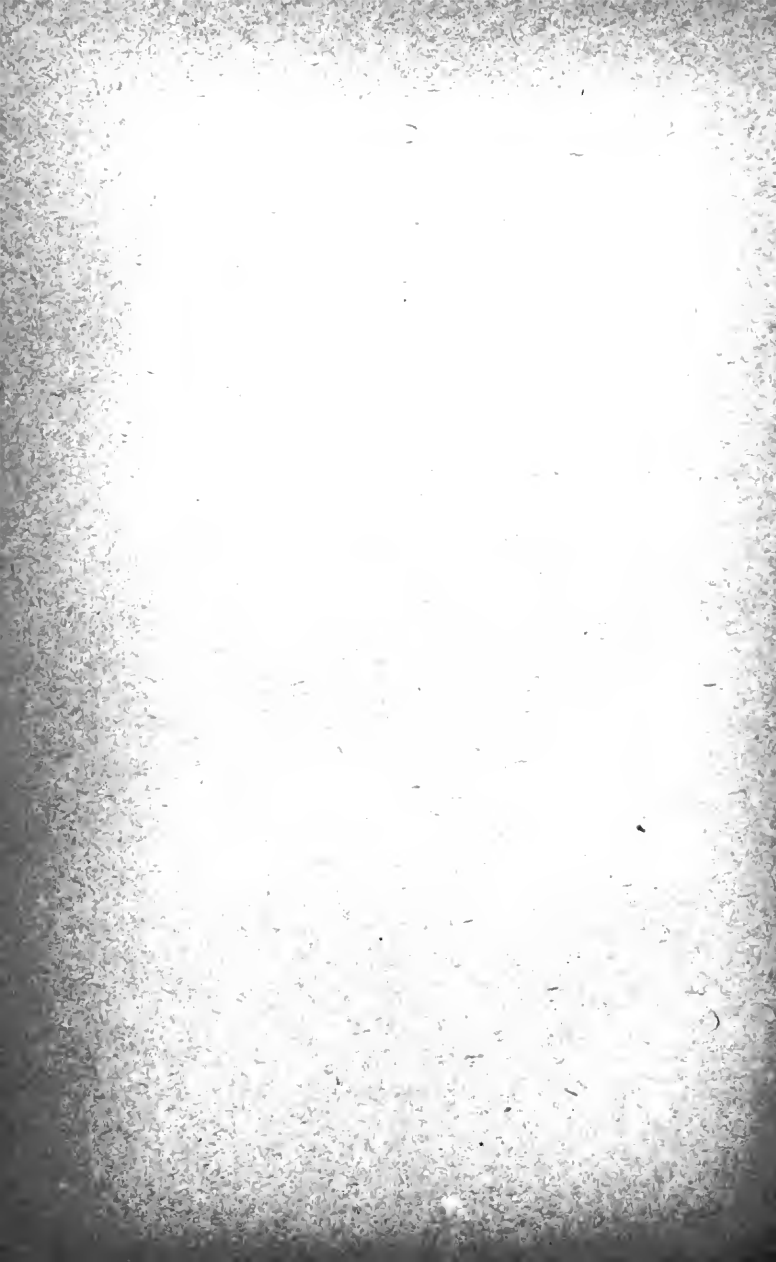
"Lonely, yet not alone, they help each other on the Way of life, the daughter who was the light of their home having gone before them. Her picture hangs on the wall just opposite where I sit, and I often notice the old couple's eyes wandering towards it. It is painted in oils—none too well—yet it brings vividly before one what was the bright, speaking face of a young girl less than twenty. All I know of her is that she was Rose, their best-loved child, and that she drooped and faded before their eyes, when the man she loved left her side, attracted by another. Poor, sweet, one summer's rose! may you be resting in peace in God's great garden of fragrant flowers, happy for ever now, with the all-sufficing Love around you and about you!

"When her parents are not in the room, I sometimes stand and gaze long at Rose's face. I feel as if I had known her—as if there is some bond of sympathy between us; and, often, I have turned away at last, shivering—fearing I scarce know what for myself 'in future days.'

"She loved well, poor girl, and her heart, I know, was worth the winning and the keeping; but the man she loved, why could not he rest content with looking at that gentle face with its eyes so full of womanly tenderness, its sweet-lipped mouth, and so give freely of his own heart's store to bring the joy of homely happiness to

abide in it for ever? Is man born fickle? I don't like to think so! But if 'needs must,' what then? I don't even know if I am of a jealous disposition yet! And, so far, I have had no reason to think ill of men. Dad says he hopes I never will have—dear old Dad! His health is now so broken, you would pity him; and he lives in the memory of the good old days.

"We hear that Cherry's Point is steadily going down. The mines are worked out, I suppose; yet there are many of the hillsides yet untouched. It would never surprise me if, in years to come, some lucky prospector once again 'struck' the gold that would make the dear old place as alive as ever it was in its palmy time! Mr. Hagelthorne was charmed with it; he said he took many valuable notes while there, and may work them up one day to its advantage."





**H**OW little we know each other!"  
The cry of the human heart,  
Seeking in vain for kinship  
In an o'ercrowded mart!



## CHAPTER XXI.

### A Letter from Dreda.

A LETTER from Dreda! It runs in this wise:  
“Dear Old Girl,—Back again after a lovely trip, bringing with me heaps of souvenirs and curios from Jap Land. You shall have some of the daintiest. All will not please your taste for the beautiful! I brought some of the ugliest idol affairs you ever dreamt of in the way of monstrosities, for Mrs. Kiljoy, Perce’s sister. And I have a bit of taste by nature for the hideous myself! Jap scenery is adorable, and so are Jap babies. But, apart from the flowers that are poetry condensed, and the babes, the temples, and the toys, I don’t think the rest of the land of the flowering plum any better than it should be. We had a splendid trip there and back, and met some extremely nice and *bon ton* people on the boats; but I confess to a feeling of relief at being back in dear old dingy Melbourne again! You would hardly know me now—I have blossomed into such a “grande dame” already! My house nearly rivals Aladdin’s,—except for the jewels, which I prefer to keep for adorning my own fair person. You must stay with me a while when you get your holidays; and I shall do my best to turn you into a little woman of the world,

and conspire with Percy to find you someone with 'lands and gold' to make you a willing slave of the wedding ring. *Apropos*, not once, but many times, I have torn *my* badge of slavery off, and thrown it at Percy's feet; but, as the result was always humiliating to myself, I am trying now to wear it with a better grace.

"It's wonderful how many things husbands and wives can find to quarrel over! You only know you're alive when you marry. A man's opinions before, and after, are so widely different that the shock stuns you, when it doesn't aggravate you to the verge of distraction. But, like everything else in this vale of tears, you become used to it, and so manage to jog along like the rest of your neighbours. And there is always the consolation that you are a person of more importance than you were as a single girl, however favoured by 'the gods.' I intend to be mistress in my own house, even if it leads to open warfare. But I am talking treason!—and to ears that are easily shocked. I hear that your last state is worse than the first, and from an honest soul I deeply pity you. Why can't you manage to be sent where there are plenty of nice young squatters? Must see if Perce can do anything for you. I hope you don't have to eat roots and drink dirty water. I was never good at geography, and have only a hazy idea about the plan of things up Mallee way.

“Denzil seems to be getting on well at Redtown. People say he is well liked, and that he takes in hand operations that the other doctors there won’t dream of. He always had a fine nerve, and the steadiest of hands. Am trying to get him to come to town while Helen is with me. I have toned down her style a lot, knowing his quiet tastes. I suppose he sends you a line occasionally?—quiet old fish that he is! It will surprise me if he ever makes a leap above the water,—but there is no knowing what a man is capable of; *I’m beginning to find that out!*

“Mother tells me that Anthony Hagelthorne admired you very much, Miss Country-mouse! I hope you did not encourage any flattering attentions of his? He is but a bird of passage, so it would not be safe to make him the hero of your young dreams. Besides, we know little or nothing of his private life. He might be married to a creole for all you know. However, it’s highly improbable that you have seen any more of his scientific Highness (where does the science come in? I’m awfully ignorant, I know; but even dad’s encomiums haven’t fully enlightened me),—and, anyway, you were meant for somebody in the sculptor, painter, or poet line! I couldn’t fancy *you* with a cloth tied round your head, helping him to catch insects, worms, beetles, or such-like ‘kittle cattle’—much less in a laboratory, half-choked with the nauseous smells arising from his unearthly concoctions. Makes me think of fire

and brimstone and other horrors! I'd make a better witch myself. . . . .

"The mater is very wrath with her 'Joan' just at present—our old friend Tags,—for she 'has been and gone' and engaged herself to a very nice young man already. But, of course, it is a bit rough on the mater, as she will be left in the lurch again, and she doesn't like the manners—or rather, the want of manners—of the 'helps' in the city registry-offices, who so often lay down the law to their mistresses, and even when they obtain their own sweet will, suddenly decamp for pastures new. She had some comical experiences before she sent for Tags, and doesn't desire a repetition of them.

"Poor old Tags!—she has developed into a Caddy Jellaby and old Turveydrop in one; and the 'young man' expects to meet two distinguished personages in his future father and mother-in-law! As long as he doesn't take a trip up to their palatial residence beforehand, all will go well; but I doubt if even his Joan would make up for the disreputable head of the family, were he brought into close contact with him!

"Heigho! what a lot of deceivers we all have to be in this world—high or low! How little we really know of each other!—how much less do we know ourselves! I've found out a few truths since we parted, old girlie, and they're anything but crystal clear or beautiful. They're ugly,

*painfully* ugly; and I'd fain forget them, but, like Sinbad and his monster, I have to carry them on my back, willy nilly—there's no getting away from them. We may fence ourselves round with lies, build houses to live in of lies, and—live with lies; but they can't prevent Truth getting in at last—truth that knows not how to creep or glide, but rushes in 'like a bull at a gate,' and will not be gainsaid!

"Am I moralising? I must cease at once, then, or I shall have wrinkles before my time; and that would never do! A woman's best days are over when she flies to the beauty parlours that are the rage at present; and I pity the masseuse who would try her skill on me, for I can't sit still longer than it takes to scribble a letter, or to have my silken locks twisted into a becoming coiffure. You ought to feel highly complimented at the length of this effusion, lead-pencilled though it be.

"Au revoir! Let me know if I can send you up anything in the drapery line. Your figure was all right when you were last in town. Now I suppose it has grown into the helpless-looking, baggy, automatic machine that is the result of nerves and don't-careness. No offence meant, only a hint to keep lithe and willowy and straight as the young saplings that form your unemotional companions as you pursue your lonely way. Don't let 'the blues' get the better of you, and—

don't forget *me* when you kneel by your little white bed of nights."

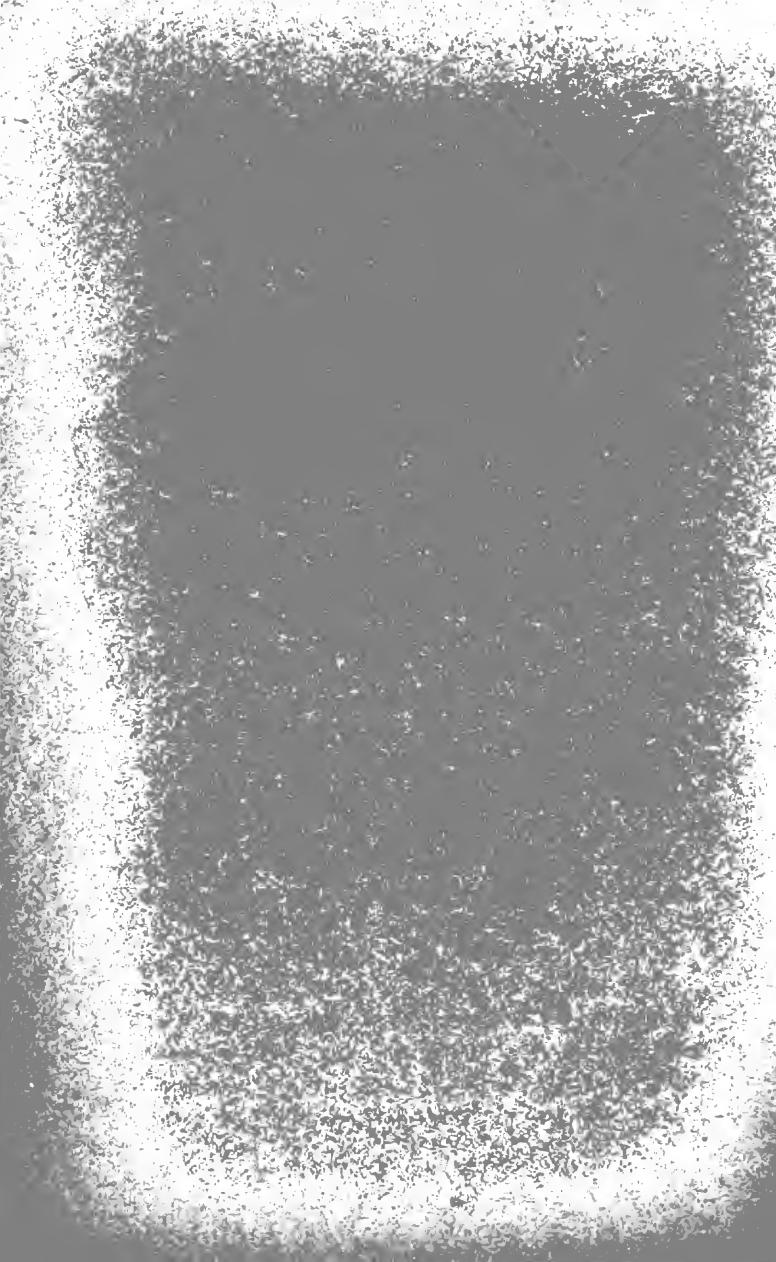
"With much love to you, dear little back-blocks schoolmarm,

"I am ever your same old

"DREDA."



SURELY its crystal should plead  
Dumbly for grace?—  
Thou seeing mirrored so clear  
Only thy face!



## CHAPTER XXII.

‘The Love of the Man for the Maid.’

**W**HILE Barbara Halliday was giving less and less thought to her old friend and first lover, Denzil Lane, the young doctor was still cherishing her image in his heart—all laws of telepathy to the contrary. He had every reason to feel satisfied with his prospects in Redtown, and he liked its people, its scenery, and its constant call on his resources, both professional and social; but he was lonely in spirit, with the loneliness a man feels when he has given his heart’s store and received nothing in return.

In a sense, he had been disappointed in Barbara; yet she was still, and must always be, the one woman in the world for him. He had no idea that Hagelthorne had followed up his brief acquaintanceship with the young girl, or he might have felt uneasy and jealous, or angry and openly alarmed. What had unsettled his mind with regard to the possibility of Barbara and himself drawing nearer to each other even by way of ordinary friendship and correspondence, was that one indifferent smile, that one indifferent glance she had given as a matter of courtesy, in response to the first trembling words on his lips, the night

she had first seen the man whose appearance had attracted her. She had been unconscious of either hurting or offending, but it was that very unconsciousness that had killed all hope in his heart. It proved unmistakably to him that she had no love for him—she liked him as she liked Dreda—no more, perhaps not as much. Under the circumstances, he thought it wiser to keep away from her, and he had wandered about as miserable and as discontented with fate as mortal could well be,—lending an unwilling ear to his sister's gleeful account of the interest 'Beebo' had inspired in "the dad's inventor friend."

Obliged to show Hagelthorne the numberless small courtesies due to his position, Denzil had not availed himself of the opportunity to know the man as he was. Neither had been specially attracted by the other. Hagelthorne's manner towards men younger and less distinguished than himself was patronising—not an open, offensive style of patronage, but that delicately-veiled form of superiority which, on the whole, irritates more. He was at his best with men of his own age, and older. He could be fascinating as a courtier when he liked; but he did not care to exercise his powers in that way for the benefit of those whose feet were but "on the threshold." He was accustomed to deference, and Denzil had neither asked for his opinions nor alluded to his scientific triumphs over-sea. He

had seen so many varied kinds of humanity in so many parts of the globe that it was only rarely that one individual in particular arrested his attention or claimed his interest. In all the bevy of well-dressed, beautiful women at Dr. Lane's, there was only one figure that stood out in his memory and refused to take a back place in his mental picture gallery—Barbara Halliday's—and he often wondered why; for he had seen lovelier women, and had heard perfect music, from matchless violins, in the hands of the great musicians of the wider world. What was Barbara, the little Australian bush girl, compared with such as these?

Still, day or night, whenever his mind was at leisure, he saw again the soft, childish face with the upturned eyes, which seemed to seek above, the vision that alone could satisfy; he saw the tender, mobile lips quiver or grow smiling glad, with the message of the composer to whose thoughts she strove to give expression; and he saw, too, always, the after-look of reverential awe and hero-worship given to himself for compliments that came as easily to his lips as sunshine to a flower!

Perhaps it was the trustful look in the clear, deep-blue eyes, allied to her girlish adoration of one whose name was familiar only in a faint, far-off way, that made his heart go out to this “wild flower of the hills;” but it did “go out”—how much to her peace of mind time would show.

The man was of an ardent nature, and he had a tenacity of purpose that was as strong in affairs of the heart as in the ordinary avocations of life. He could have gone his way, and let Barbara go hers. But, for weal or for woe, the "wild-flower" had taken his fancy; and nothing as yet had been too far out of his reach.

Hence his visit to the country. He wanted to see her daily environment for himself, how she looked in it, and how she bore herself. He was well satisfied. Her evident pleasure in seeing him so soon again, her blushing embarrassment and brave attempts to maintain dignity and to entertain him for the short time at his disposal, delighted him. And, if anything, she looked to more advantage in her neat navy-blue serge with white collar and cuffs than in the clinging silk muslin gown she had worn when he first saw her. Her hair's natural glossiness was more apparent in thick coils than in fluffy masses, and her broad white brow was more in evidence; her eyes were so 'deeply, darkly, beautifully blue' that they reminded him of the Swiss lakes beside which he had lingered on many a well-earned holiday, and her voice seemed as the voice of one he had known and loved long since.

He found more pleasure speaking to this simple girl with her adorable look of trustfulness than he had done to women whose names were a household word. He talked to her of his travels, of his hopes for the future, of the invention that had

brought him fame, and showed her the Swedish decorations and French medals he never travelled without.

As he opened the small cases in which he kept them, not a glance nor a movement of hers escaped his eye. He wondered if he were in love with simplicity and childish purity at last, and sighed at the “folly” of it. He knew he should pass on and away for ever, but he was very human, as men go; so when he returned to town he immediately posted the young girl a volume of poems and some magazines,—and, writing in a stiff and formal fashion, asked her if he might sometimes send a line to her as a friend who might be of “some small service” to her some day, should she ever travel “to wider lands.”

Barbara was only human, too; and, though half-frightened at the pleasant prospect of hearing from her new friend with regularity, she sent him a little note to say that she thought it very kind of him to give a thought to her, and she “would be very pleased to hear ‘of’ him occasionally.” The significant preposition made him smile, but he liked the girl the better for it, and did not delay in writing her the longest letter he had ever penned in his busy life. That was the beginning of a correspondence which soon became a weekly one, but which he was always telling himself must end as soon as he sailed for Europe.

Denzil Lane had never sent Barbara a line, yet he never looked into a sick child's large, sad eyes but he saw hers. He worked hard at his profession, with the words "a man worth knowing" ever ringing in his ears, and when he was weary his heart ached more than his limbs—for love of her. He was not conversant with the little arts men, as a whole, practise as well as women, when there is love that they covet at stake. He had a sturdy, silent sort of faithfulness that is not often met with, and passed as a woman-hater in consequence,—though many an ailing girl wondered at the tender, reverential, chivalrous gentleness of his touch, when in pain not even his skill could assuage. Sick children longed for his coming, and old women said he "was as good as a son" to them in their ailments; yet to pour out his heart on paper was a thing he could not, and never would, accomplish. It did not strike him that his silence would be misconstrued by one he knew so well, or that it was but natural there should be a certain amount of pique aroused in her nature by his seeming indifference. In other words, he did not understand woman! And, for his want of knowledge, he had to suffer, and cause her he loved, suffering, too.



**B**ETWEEN the lines of life, what man may read?—  
All blindly on, perforce, each soul must speed!



## CHAPTER XXIII.

“Between the Lines.”

**D**REDA'S letters to her brother since her marriage, had contained little or no reference to Barbara, but were tinged with a growing discontent that Denzil was powerless to account for; unless it meant that she was unhappy with Pridhall. Well, he had done his best to save her, and she *would* marry what he was pleased to term “that beast.”

He had guessed that her bed would not be of roses, but he had not thought she would feel the thorns so soon.

As far as he could gather, Pridhall, the generous before marriage, had turned out Pridhall, the mean, after marriage; and he knew that his sister was extravagant by nature, and thus the two opposing qualities must, as a matter of consequence, collide, with considerable loss of temper to both.

Pridhall evidently gave entertainments on the most lavish scale, saw that his wife was perfectly gowned, and his house appointments up to date in every particular; but—left her short of “ready money.” She must ask for every shilling she required, and explain why she wanted it. This, to a girl of Dreda's proud and generous tempera-

ment, was gall and wormwood! She had married for money, and, vulgarly speaking, she had "fallen in." Denzil thought of bridge and horse-racing and their attendant temptations, and inwardly shuddered. Dreda Pridhall was not likely to be any better than Dreda Lane—and the remembrance that he had had to part with a couple of five-pound notes to settle Dreda's little debts of honour before the wedding, was not calculated to make him feel sanguine as to her ability to resist the call of the gambler when she wished for money. On the other hand, instinct, more than brotherly love, told him there was the making of a fine character in his sister if she fell into the right hands.

Well, perhaps fear of Pridhall, if not some deeper feeling, might keep her from doing anything foolhardy or dangerous. If not, then he must step in and do his part. He had a vague idea that it might not be a small part, either.

How glad he was that Barbara Halliday was never led away by worldly allurements! Yet how might even she stand, should she contract a loveless marriage? After all, she had never been tried "in the furnace." Her life, so far, had been uneventful. She wanted bringing out, of course, and even if she married him in the end, he would have little to offer for her ultimate advantage. Music would mean company, and he was not a gregarious animal by nature. She probably had ambitions of which he never dreamed. And he

thought again of that night when he had suddenly become as nothing to her. His own pictures of the future never went further than his own home fireside, with her beside him. His idea of complete happiness was in its quiet domesticity. But how long would such a life content her, with her gifts?

Had he known the thoughts that were passing through his rival's mind at the same time, he would have been somewhat startled, to say the least of it. Anthony—loving the girl, too, in his own way—never for a moment pictured Barbara as leading the ordinary housewife's life. In his mental vision she was travelling with him wherever beautiful sights were to be seen, and beautiful sounds to be heard; wherever learning in all branches was to be acquired, and exciting experiences to be obtained—all that was of natural talent in her being fostered, till it developed into something his world would be forced to acknowledge and to do homage unto.

For Hagelthorne was, first of all, ambitious, and thought everybody else with "anything in them" should be also. Love, he believed, in common with Denzil, was the great lever of the universe; but Anthony's ideas of love were not ennobled by the finest feelings. He called himself a "humanitarian," and said he aimed at the betterment of the human race as a whole. But, as we know, humanitarianism can fail sadly where the case of the individual is concerned. Its roots are

rarely sunk in that deep soil which alone can bring it to the perfect bloom of which its devotees so ceaselessly prate.

Denzil, though he had all the faults of the young man, of which egotism is not the least, recognised in a deeper sense than did the man of the world, his obligations with regard to individual responsibility. There was much of his father in him; and old Dr. Lane had never let anything stand in his way—or anybody—when he could assist in the slightest degree the meanest of God's creatures.

Hagelthorne's ideas were often on a grand and a broad scale, but he could feel no pity for the dumb creature whom he used as a means to discover the answer to any scientific problem that puzzled him; and many of his researches were based on a refinement of cruelty which would have utterly shocked Barbara, had she known it. But, content to take her friends on trust, as she had done those of her childhood, the young girl never even thought of inquiring into their beliefs on vital subjects.

Her experience of the world had been most limited, and she did not look beneath the surface of things unless accident compelled her to do so. She did not realise that she was losing her heart to a man of whose inner self she knew comparatively nothing. A crisis in her affairs was rapidly approaching, but she was no more aware of it than were the leaves of the forest. She did her

duty every day "with all her mind and all her strength," as she believed, and had been taught that she should do; she found a sober pleasure in the increasing attachment of the old couple with whom she lived, and in that of the school children whom she instructed; but her real life was in the receiving and writing of letters to Anthony Hagelthorne.

Mail day was at once her longest and her dreariest, and her shortest and her happiest day. The hours seemed interminable until such time as the longed-for loose-bag was in her hands,—and, even then, how sick was her heart with anxiety lest he should have neglected to write to her!

After the letter was read, it had to be read again—that wonderful "between the lines" which is of such attraction to women!

A shade of coldness, a careless ending, and she was miserable. An extra word of kindness, of commendation, a touch of warmer personal feeling, and she was happy for the rest of the week! Who is not familiar with the malady? Who is there that does not understand, and perhaps sympathise with it? We have all gone through the same experience some time or other. If not with a lover's letters, then with those from somebody we wished were one!

And there was no one in the district to help take her mind off Hagelthorne. She never saw the township for more than an hour or two every

second Saturday, and locally there were none but young farmers of German parentage, who never came near the Frenchman's homestead unless compelled to by business. When they did, they were shy and sheepish, or rough and abrupt. She was miles away from the "station folk," who might have made life brighter,—and, in any case, she was "only a reliever," a bird of passage, whose instructions to flee might come any day.

At times she longed for the "blue letter" that might give her the opportunity of going towards—"home," she would have said. But the natural craving for her own people was now merged into a deeper longing for the sight of the face that haunted her dreams. Already she knew the date of the sailing of the steamer that was to carry away the man she looked upon as her dearest friend. He had sent her his portrait, and asked for one of hers in return. She had sent one, morbidly conscious of its deficiencies, and had proudly set his up in state, in her little bedroom, where her eyes could find it without effort on entering after the toil of the day. Dan's was now an object of secondary interest beside it; and she never opened the pages of her journal.

It would have surprised her had she known how intently the pictured faces of the two men were studied by motherly Mrs. Lecœur. Not a day passed but that well-meaning old lady speculated silently about both—for she had no doubt but that both were Miss Halliday's lovers. And she



had come to the conclusion that when the young school-mistress was in low spirits—as she occasionally was—it was because she could not "make up her mind between them." She grieved that the young girl's reserve built up a barrier which prevented her from giving the benefit of her opinion,—and now and again she tried to win Barbara's confidence. But, as there was nothing to be told, she did not gain the information sought.

Of the two faces, Mrs. Lecœur preferred Dan's, recognising in it, with her woman's intuition, purity of aim and character. The head of the other man of her interest was nobly shaped, but there was something in the expression of the mouth that the good soul did not feel at ease about; and one day she lifted the portrait-stand from the mantelpiece, and carried it out to Antoine, her husband, to ask him what he thought of the face.

The old Frenchman, taking it from his wife, held it up to his near-sighted eyes. His answer (translated) was:

"The angel of light in the brow; the angel of darkness in the jaw. But trouble not, the child is not for such as he!"

In spite of this assurance, the good woman put back the photo with a sigh. She knew the heart of her own sex. And, going into the room where Rose's picture hung, she looked at it, and wept,—for to the old is sometimes given divination.

The Lecœurs had come to love the girl who brought brightness into their dull lives. They did not look on her as a mere boarder, but as one whom a kind Providence had sent to help fill the place of the daughter they had lost. Everything she did and said, everything she had, was of genuine interest to them. And they feared nothing more than her removal from Dumgarra. The year before she came they had had rust in the wheat, and things had gone ill with them. Since her coming, they fancied a blessing had been on their labour. They were grateful for her constant thoughtfulness on their behalf—no one appreciates consideration more than the old—and in their own way they quietly repaid her in kind.

**H**ER voice is the murmur of hidden streams,  
Chanting the music of Love's lost dreams;  
Beside her, angels converse with me,—  
Pray God I keep ever her devotee!



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### The Sunlight and the Snow.

“PASS hats!”

Every little scholar's face brightened as the welcome command was obeyed; for it was a day that made one long to be in the sunshine, living an irresponsible life, and making merry with the rest of created things.

“Teacher” smiled in sympathetic response. She, too, wanted to get out into the fresh air and the sunlight. As she set the little feet marching away from lessons, and answered their affectionate farewells, a longing came over her to be a child again. She watched the last little one go, with misty eyes, and a sob in her throat, —then went in again to the dingy building, to “tidy up” for the morrow.

She swept and dusted, cleaned her blackboards, set the next day's sums and home lessons, drew the outline of North America daintily and correctly with the chalk, put away stray books and pencils, then “locked up,” and started on the road home.

There was a light but bracing breeze, and she drew its freshness in gratefully. She had her pocket Browning with her, and she contemplated sitting under a tree when within sight of the homestead, and reading a little before she went

in for her cup of tea. But some of the healthy gladness of youth rushed into her blood with the glimmer of the sunshine on the grass and the note of a bird on the wing, and she scribbled her thoughts instead, on an old envelope, as she walked leisurely in the familiar track.

They were lines that told of her love for the ranges her feet, perhaps, would never tread more. For the time, she was far away:—

I hear the wild birds' singing,  
I hear the waters' flow;  
The hills are calling, calling—  
I cannot choose but go!

"Oh," she said aloud, "only to be back there again, what wouldn't I give!"

"Barbara!"

She stood still, lead-pencil in hand, blushing and paling,—for, coming quickly towards her, was none other than Anthony Hagelthorne.

The shock of seeing him so suddenly, robbed her of all speech. In her confusion she did not notice that he had called her by her Christian name.

"Ah, I was too abrupt! Poor child, what a shame to descend upon you with never a word of warning! But you will forgive me, will you not, for I could not go away without coming to bid you good-bye in person? I hired a buggy at Horsham; it is now at the place of the people with whom you board. I found that you were

usually on the way home at this hour, and—here I am! Have you no word of welcome for me?"

He spoke softly and caressingly, holding her hand in his, and gazing at her with all his heart in his expressive eyes—grey at ordinary times, but now black with intense feeling.

"Oh!" she gasped at length, "I am so glad, so glad!—but—"

"But why did I come all this long way, you would ask? Child, cannot you guess? Look up, and tell me what you see!"

She looked up, and her heart gave one swift bound of joy; then an unaccountable feeling of fear came over her, and she strove to free her hand; but he held it all the firmer.

"No, no; it is my prisoner till you answer me! Tell me, dear one, what do you see in my face? Are my eyes so cold and lifeless, then?"

"No, oh, no!" she stammered, her own face one bright blush from brow to neck; "but—I may not read aright. Indeed, indeed, I cannot!"

There was such evident distress in the tone of her voice that he gently released her hand, and took her books from her.

"We shall walk on, and I shall grow cooler, and not excite you with what no doubt seem foolish questions. But I must speak out what is in my heart at once,—for time is short. Barbara, I have come so far, child, because—'I cannot choose but love you!' I cannot live without you, little one. I must return to London, but do not

bid me return alone. Oh, if you can only give me love for love, how I shall fill your life with happiness! You shall see the great cities of the world, and all that is beautiful within them! Barbara! Barbara! Just one little word, one look, that I may hope!"

He seized her hand again, and pressed it against his lips. This time she did not try to remove it from his grasp,—and, thrusting the books in his pocket, he put his arm around her trembling figure and drew her to his breast.

She looked up at him with shining eyes, and, in a passion of delight, he bent his face to hers and kissed her over and over again.

"You do love me a little bit, then, my darling?"

"I never—knew I did—till now!"

He felt her heart beating against his own, and was satisfied of the truth of her words.

He answered them in lover fashion, and after a little she said, with a deep sigh of rapture:

"Oh, Anthony, to think I am to be your wife! Oh, the joy of it all!"

He leaned his cheek against hers silently for a moment, as if in acquiescence, then suddenly lifted his head and gazed straight before him with a stricken sort of look which it was well she did not see.

"Barbara?"

"Yes, dearest."

And she nestled in closer to him.



"Barbara, do you think your love is great enough to span any sea of trouble that might arise between us? Do you think that anything—anything—any sin, for instance, could have power to separate us, when we love each other so? Could you, would you, give up everything you hold dear for my sake, if I were to put you to the test?"

"Anything — everything," she said softly, "except God."

His face grew white.

"I am not as religious, dear, as you are. My love is greater, then, than what you have to give me, I am afraid,—for I hold nothing dearer in heaven or on earth than you, my darling, my sweet, child-like sweetheart—and I shall not let you give me up. You shall not! You must not!"

"Anthony—oh, Anthony!—what do you mean? Why should you be afraid of anything coming between us?"

"Your God can come between us!" he said bitterly. "Religions lay down certain laws for their adherents to obey, do they not?" he went on rapidly. "And well I know all your loyal heart hopes and prays for! But, little one, I refuse to obey any laws but those of nature. I intend to be free—free! And I would that you were free likewise! But I do not ask for impossibilities; though, in the one tremendous sacrifice I must ask of you now,—new as our love is—and you all un-

ready to respond—may arise to confront me the impossibility my whole soul dreads.”

He turned away his face, and she, feeling in her woman's instinct that he was suffering greatly, though his words were wild and reckless, and but half understood by her, went back to him, and put her arm timidly, yet confidently, within his.

“If you would only tell me what it is that is troubling you, dear,” she said imploringly, “perhaps you would find me braver than you think. What threatens to come between us, Anthony? Tell me now, and put me out of this awful misery of uncertainty!” For a thousand fears were tearing at her heart.

I N the hush of hidden gullies,  
Where thy secret presence thrills,  
I have known the peace imparted  
Which the hush of God instils !



## CHAPTER XXV.

### A Revelation and a Temptation.

**I**N misery?—so soon? Ah, child, I did wrong in coming at all! I should have let you go on in your lonely path—should have let you think I had forgotten you——”

“No, no! Oh, Anthony, not that! You have come, you have told me you love me——”

“And you have a right to an explanation of my wild words? Yes, yes, it is true—and you shall have it, whatever it costs me. Barbara,” he took her hands in his and held them tightly, as if to gain courage for what he was about to say; “I once, in my younger days, thought I loved a woman with the one enduring love, and she thought she loved me in return. I became engaged to her in the usual way, and, after a short time, we—were married. (Courage, child, I have not finished!) My work took me away from home a good deal, and one day I was returning with a present for her that I thought would give her pleasure, when I was met by a friend, a man, who told me my wife had left her home—and me.

“She had not gone alone. She had found someone she loved better—a stranger to me, but well known to many of my friends. I asked my informant if he knew where she was. He did. After making me promise not to harm her in any

way—a promise that I laughed at to hear asked at all—he gave me the address, and—I sought her out. My unexpected visit was a great shock to her, and she was then alone. I assured her that she had nothing to fear from me, but I wanted to know why she had played with my honour as a husband and a protector. Her first answer was to the effect that she had not loved me enough. To find that she didn't love me was no surprise. I had long felt it, and she had often told me herself that she wished she cared more for me. When I told her what I had heard, and what I thought of her action, she didn't attempt to defend it. She told me all, and begged to be forgiven. Had no one taken sides against her, I should have judged her harshly, but I could not desert utterly a suffering woman, though she had wronged me much. I thought bitterly of her and of my dishonour at first, but I wouldn't even then have given scandal-mongers one sop more by leaving her, too. Had her sin been deeper than it was—aye, had it been as deep as that of the very vilest—she still had had a claim on my protection in her need."

Barbara was weeping quietly.

After a moment's pause, he went on again—

"I suppose you guess the remainder, though your pure ears are not used to being sullied with such tales. Yes, I took her back to my home. She still lives in it. But, though I provide for her, and ever will, no strangers have been, and

are, further apart than she and I. Most people think I am an unmarried man, it is so long ago now; and I let them think it. I never knew I should meet at the other side of the globe a woman I could love and worship as I do you. I have told you all; I am at your mercy. And, oh, Barbara, for the sake of the God you so adore, have pity—and, at least, forgive!”

In an agony of bewildered pain and pity, the girl threw her arms round the man's neck; and, with a gleam of hope upon his face, he bent and whispered again of his love, of his plans for her, and pleaded with all his powers of persuasion and fascination for her to cleave to him, and him only, and she would never repent it.

The trial for which she was so unprepared had numbed to some extent Barbara's faculties, and she could not think clearly. She only knew she was being urged by the man she loved to go back with him that very evening to Horsham, leaving him to explain by some flimsy pretext her sudden flight, and to catch the night train to Melbourne—never to live a life of drudgery again. But her habit of constant communion with spiritual things did not fail her. Prayer for help from above rose naturally in her heart like a well of clear, sweet water in its parching ground, and, with a swift movement, she soon wrenched herself away from her lover and asked for “a moment—only a moment—to think.”

He watched her as she leaned against the tree—watched her with passionately-loving and hopeful eyes—while the colour ebbed and flowed in her sensitive face, and her hands clasped and unclasped in her extremity.

Then, just as he thought victory was his, her eyes grew wide and staring, her hands fell limply by her side, and she was in an attitude of listening,—her lips moving voicelessly, as if answering some person unseen. Hagelthorne moved nearer to her.

“What is the matter, dearest? Do you feel ill—unstrung?”

Barbara gave a deep breath, and, looking at him dreamily, said:

“ ‘Keep yourselves unspotted from the world,’ we are told by the dear Lord who loved us all; and ‘some day,’ Dan said, ‘in your hour of need, when you see the snow lie white and cold and spotless, as it lies now on the hills, you will think of me, and—remember!’ ”

Hagelthorne looked at her as if he thought she was bereft of her senses. Indeed, for a few minutes he did think so, and was in an agony of remorse.

“The snow? Snow, here! Where?”

“I saw it just now—there,” said Barbara, her blue eyes dilating, but not with fear, and pointing to a sheet of water on which the sun was shining.



"Oh, an optical illusion, is that all?" said Anthony, much relieved. "Yes, it doesn't look unlike snow in the distance; but, come, darling, my answer? Time presses!" And he took out his watch, and looked at it.

"There is no other answer," said Barbara, sadly. "I have seen the snow—and remembered!"

A chill came over the passionate heart of the listener.

"Remembered what? Barbara, do not trifle with me!"

"I am not trifling, Anthony,—God knows my heart shall ache for ever for you,—but, oh, my darling, I cannot give up, I must not give up, God for you! I must try, instead, to keep myself unspotted from the world; or I shall never know happiness in this world or the next. Do not reproach me, Anthony! I cannot bear it now! God bless you for your goodness to your poor wife. Hush! hush! Yes, He will—in some way you cannot see now. And, oh, Anthony, whenever you think of her, and of what you wished me to do for your sake, put me in her place for a moment, and you will yet rejoice that I said No!"

The man winced as if she had struck him a heavy blow; and as the girl forced her feet forward, and walked on alone, half-fainting with the strength of the conflicting emotions that possessed her, she heard, and would hear to her

dying day, in silent hours, the sound of his deep, hard sobbing.

She herself lay sleepless on her bed all the long, dreary night, and for so many nights afterwards, that Mrs. Lecœur, hearing her from the next room, tossing about, and marking how wan and worn her face was growing, and how all brightness of manner had gone from her, grew desperate; and, going to her room one evening just as she had retired, she begged her to trust her, and to tell her her trouble.

But, though Barbara cried freely on the good, warm-hearted woman's breast, she could not bring herself to give even a bare outline of what had occurred, but only promised to do so at some future day, "when life looked brighter."

The consequence was that the troubled, kindly old soul at once came to the conclusion that she was secretly married to the gentlemanly-looking man who had driven out to see her, and that, for some reason or other, she had ceased to care for him.

A week after Anthony's visit, Barbara saw his name in the list of passengers for London.

For a time, school suffered, and so did all the pursuits the girl had interested herself in, and poor James Halliday—now but a wreck of the fine, upstanding man he had been—felt a want in the home letters, and began to crave for a sight of his "little girl" again.

But Barbara's spirit was courageous, and she knew where to find the only strength that counts; so, by the time her holidays came, no one would have known by any outward sign that she and her soul had been "through deep waters," and had faced the Evil One, unafraid.



**I** SHALL live in your kiss on my cheek  
In the draught from the wine of your rills,  
In the words only you now may speak,  
O winds from the beautiful hills!



## CHAPTER XXVI.

Barbara Returns To Her Journal.

Redtown,

'The Spring of the Year,' 18—.

Dear Dan,—

**I**T seems long years since I took up this little journal last, yet it is, in reality, but a short time. I have been face to face with trouble, and have learned to know much of what the heart can be made to endure. 'Love came to me with shining wings,' and I had to bid it fly away, away—where I shall never see it again all my lonely life! But I have kept faith with all *you* would have me do; and I can look at your dear face in its little silver frame with a throb of quiet gladness in my heart that I can say, with truth, that, if God let us put back the years, I could stand by your side again, as when a child, and gaze out through the dear old home windows at the snow lying still and white, like a garment, on hill and plain, and tell you that your last words to me—which I have never forgotten, and never shall—have borne the fruit I know you prayed they would.

"But, oh, it was hard!—that leaving the one I had grown to care for more than all on earth—Anthony Hagelthorne—to seem to be deaf and blind to his anguish, to turn away with eyes that

seemed cold and cruel, even though he had had no right to either give, or claim, love, when every law of Heaven forbade our union! If only I had known in time that he was not free, and another had the right to stand by his side while life should last, how much suffering we both might have been spared! But, without knowing it, I had got to care for him with all my heart and soul. I thought he was as open as the day, and as far above me as the stars of Heaven. Vanity blinded my eyes. I was so happy even in the belief that he thought enough of me to call me 'friend.' And when he came so unexpectedly one day, with the sunshine and the singing of birds and the growing gladness of every created thing, and told me love for me had brought him all the long, dreary way, I felt as if all the glory of joyous life had descended upon me like a mantle; and I could have died with ecstasy!

"Ah, within one short hour I had learned all that both joy and pain, temptation and surrender, could teach, and had grown into a sad and despairing woman.

"I bade him farewell, not as a woman bids farewell to the one she loves, but with a farewell that was not of words, not of caresses, but was a literal desertion of all the tender shoots and blossoms of all which had made beautiful the garden of our hearts.

"I never saw him again. I was in my room when he came, later, to the house and drove back



to Horsham. He never asked for me; he knew I would have sent him an excuse—anything to avoid another meeting. I do not know what the good Lecœur's thought. I did not care for weeks afterwards about anything or anybody. I taught school somehow,—feeling all the while as if a great stone were pressing on my brain and on my heart. Everything seemed an effort. I could scarcely pray. I knew that every friend who was a true friend would have said it was 'all for the best,'—yes, 'all for the best!'

"I repeated it over and over to myself, for I knew I had done wrong in the first place, by allowing myself to get to care for a stranger of whose inner life I knew absolutely nothing. I know now that I have much—oh, so much!—to be thankful for. I shudder to think of what might have been! And I also see that God was very good to me in placing me with the two dear, simple, honest souls, whose lives were so filled with His spiritual peace that they could not but impart some of it to me when my wound was sorest. For the few months longer that I was with them they treated me with a parent's tenderness and care,—and when the day came that I was ordered away to Redtown, the parting from them was a severer wrench than I had ever dreamed of. Yet I think the change to a town life, with its more varied interests, and the forced commingling with people of all shades of temperament, could not have come at a more op-

fortune time; for my health had really begun to decline, and I was always listless and weary. I felt the extreme heat of the summer in Dumgarra, and, in any case, the road to school was full of too many bitter-sweet memories."

**I**N us, and about us, far fiercer battles rage,  
The storm-fire of the fiend who prompts to ill;  
And the spirit-world lies closer to the earthly than  
we deem,—  
St. Michael and the devil wrestle still!



## CHAPTER XXVII.

### Beside the Grampian Ranges.

**I**T seems so strange to be where my old friend Denzil is—Denzil, who is older-looking and more dignified in manner than I had pictured him, but who is, at the same time, as kind and as thoughtful as in the days that are gone.

“ ‘Dr. Lane’ here, and ‘Dr. Lane’ there—it sounds so oddly familiar, reminding me of Cherry’s Point and his poor father, who passed away a short time ago, to Dad’s great grief, and to the sorrow of all who had ever come into close contact with his gentle, unassuming nature.

“Ah, well! Denzil promises to follow in his footsteps in his profession and manner of going through life, and I often feel proud of him for ‘old sake’s sake.’ He has not married, though he is much sought after as an eligible man, and one who must have saved more than a little for a rainy day. I know, however, that he sends, and has always sent, a good deal of money to his mother, and he was a generous brother always to Dreda—poor, unhappy Dreda!

“Sometimes I have wondered, looking into his grave, kindly eyes, if he ever remembered that day in Drury Gully before the sorrow came into my life that has made me feel old and often

world-weary. I understand now the pain I must have given him—alas, how little understood then! Perhaps it was my fault that he afterwards held aloof from women. He may have thought me but a heartless flirt, and judged better women harshly for his mistake. He fought *his* battle well, anyway, and is none the worse for it to-day, while I—well, only God knows if I am any better for mine!

“I have suffered, and suffered deeply. That I have unwittingly been the cause, by the fact of mere existence, of greater suffering to the man I loved, does not take from its bitterness. Yet I am not without peace—a strange, inexpressible sort of peace that raises me at times to heights of a calm exultation of spirit I cannot understand. And, because of what I have gone through myself, my sympathies with all and everyone have widened, and I cannot judge, or criticise, or exact even what ‘should be’ from other people.

“I shall never again be sure of myself, or of anybody. At any rate, I shall be more pitiful towards the weak and erring of our common humanity—pitiful even towards the strong, whose strength, mayhap, was bought at a piteous price! . . .

“Music means more to me now, but I find greater comfort in pouring out my soul on the organ in our church here, where I sometimes relieve the organist, than I do on even my be-

loved violin. Mozart, to my mind, is the best soother of the spirit, the grandest consolation-giver of all the great masters, and in his Masses I can lose myself and draw nearer the Throne from which all glorious melody flows!

“The people of Redtown are more musical than most townsfolk I have come in contact with, and they are very sociable. Of course, the one thing usually implies the other. Every second person sings, or plays, or paints—and creditably, too. And one girl has just won the Longstaff travelling scholarship.\* There is a School of Mines, and the more ambitious qualify themselves there for city positions. I like the ‘push,’ the energy, and the ‘bon camaraderie’ of the townsfolk,—but, more than all, I like their scenery!

“Oh, these grand old Grampians!—standing so huge and solemn and gloriously blue against the sky—bare, compared with the thickly-timbered hills of the Point and Blacks’ Spur—but so mighty, so imposing,—more like what one reads of European mountains. I went out to them with a picnic party the other day, driving—18 miles or so—and after we had reached Hall’s Gap, and they took me climbing where I could get ‘the best view,’ it is no exaggeration to record that the beauty, the immensity of space before me, made me feel

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\* Now a famous Victorian artist, whose work is always on exhibition,

so faint and light-headed that I would have fallen into one of the deepest crevasses, had it not been for one of the girls who came to my assistance. I must have the organ of sublimity too highly developed! But the scene *was* lovely! And the wild flowers!—why, they were a revelation. No wonder poor Baron Von Mueller spent so much of his life in collecting and classifying them; no wonder half a lifetime was spent by Mrs. Rowan in painting them.

The Grampian heather, too, was in bloom—in long, graceful sprays that looked from the distance as if covered with snow. Its perfume is pungent and sweet; it satisfies some craving in me that nothing like it has ever done before. The heath I am more familiar with—pink, and white, and crimson,—only that its fairy bells are three times as large here as on the ranges round ‘the Point.’

“There are magnificent falls in the Grampians, and peculiar creek-bed formations (oh, to think that Anthony missed them!), one of the most beautiful of which is that known as ‘Venus’ Bath’—a veritable stone bath, filled with the clearest and purest of water. There are wonderful gullies, too, where the maidenhair proves more worthy of its poetical name than anywhere else I have seen it,—not excepting Cherry’s Point.

“‘The Sisters’—a group of rocks that seem as if suddenly flung down upon the plain by weary



giants, and left there—are a marvel of interest to me also. To them was paid my first visit of inspection as ‘a stranger and a pilgrim.’ I had wandered out of the town towards the east, and, seeing a narrow track leading into the bush, followed it. The scent of wattle was in the air, and presently I came on the prettiest of sights, an avenue of golden wattle—not the tiny, feathery, golden balls of my birth-place, but the large, soft balls of gold that belong to the tree of the broader leaf,—and, after breathing in their wonderful fragrance,—life-giving breath to me! —I suddenly sat down on the ground, and wept and wept as I had never done before, and may never again. The tightness in my brain had given away. Tears came that healed where others had seared; and since then the gloom has lifted from life, and though I never expect to be happy, at least I may have power to help towards the happiness of those whose path crosses mine.

“This is a mining town, and I find a certain amount of pleasure in poking about what is termed Moonlight Hill, where one of the deepest mines in the State is located. Deserted shafts and windlasses, and all the paraphernalia of mining life, draw me as a magnet a needle, and the sight of pieces of quartz thrills me like a familiar song—‘crystal’ we used to call it as children.”



I AM near you—oh, so near you!  
When you whisper, I can hear you!  
And I walk in your heart-places,  
And caress sweet flower-faces;  
When you call, my soul shall hear you,—  
Love, O love! My heart is near you!



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### A Mining Accident.

THERE has been one sad accident at the Napier mine since my arrival, and I am not likely to forget it. I was in school—it was about 11 a.m.—teaching a Fourth Class arithmetic, in Redtown East, when I heard through the open windows the prolonged whistle which, to those reared as I had been in the bustle of the earlier days, could only mean one thing! I forgot time and place—and duty.

“I threw down the chalk and ran, hatless, out of the school, as fast as I could towards the Napier—the only mine in active work. As I flew along, I saw all the women of Moonlight Hill rushing from their homes, wringing their hands, and—mad with fear—making for the same place. They knew, too, that the screeching and wailing of the Napier whistle wasn’t all for nothing.

“As I got nearer, I saw that one girlish-looking woman, with a face like that of the dead, was already at the mouth of the shaft, where the men were hauling up. One of the men turned his head round suddenly, and waved away the woman hurrying up to them; and, a moment after, there arose a shriek which drove all the blood from my face, and made my knees shake together. I saw the women trying to get the girl away from the mouth of the pit, but she

pushed them all back with her hands—little, trembling hands that had grown strong as tigers' claws in a second of time; and then, what something told me was a lifeless thing, I saw laid reverently down on the grass, and felt that it was the poor soul's husband.

"She threw herself on her knees beside him, and lifted his head to her breast. The blood was running down his face, but she kissed him with passionate kisses that ought to have wakened the dead. And it was not only the women who were weeping. Down many a man's cheek the slow tears coursed. My heart, too, was breaking for the poor girl's agony, but I could only stand and wait like the rest till the opportunity was given to console and sympathise.

"Suddenly somebody brushed past me, and went quickly up to the first group. It was Denzil; and in a few minutes everyone was obeying his orders—neighbours were leading the despairing woman home, and I was following them. We all did our best for her, but she never ceased sobbing and screaming; and through it all ran the wail of her little baby boy, crying for the mother who never before had remained deaf to his helpless cries! It was a long time before I managed to put him to sleep; and then I was afraid to move from the dark corner of the room I was in, for fear of disturbing him; so, worn out with one thing and another, I dropped off to sleep with the child in my arms.

"When I awoke Denzil was bending above me, and he looked worn and white. He took the baby from me very gently, and without a word,—and disappeared with it; then, coming back, he said authoritatively, 'You are not needed here at present. I am returning to Main-street, and you'd better come with me.'

"He hurried me off, and when I got out into the daylight I began to realise that I might get a severe reprimand from my head-teacher, and stammered out my fears to Denzil. He laughed, quite grimly for him, and said, 'I made that all right for you long ago. But I wouldn't advise you, for your own sake, to be such a creature of impulse again.'

"I felt snubbed and a little hurt, but, even if I looked it, Dr. Denzil did not seem to notice it, and we walked on without any more attempts at conversation till I reached the house where I boarded. Then he said:

" 'You're not up in 'first aid,' are you?'

"I shook my head, and he said, coldly:

" 'Then the sooner you attend my weekly lectures here the better! You have a clear brain, and can stand unpleasant sights. If you learned a little of the art of nursing, you might be of some assistance to your fellow-creatures by-and-bye.' And he strode off.

"So, you see, Denzil lives only for his profession.

"That night I could not sleep, but was present in spirit with the poor miner's wife in her overwhelming sorrow. I go up to see her and her orphaned little one occasionally, and do what I can to assist her. The parish priest here—Father Guilfoyle—is beloved by all denominations because of his exceeding charity and his work among hospital patients. The hospital is some distance from the town, and he is often aroused at unearthly hours to hasten to the aid of the dying. He is 'prompt at every call,' whatever time or weather it arrives at, and people say that Dr. Lane is one of his most earnest helpers. I am so glad of it! There are no half-measures about Denzil. He gives one 'all or nothing.' Who get most in this world, I often wonder—people who exact much and give little, or people who give much and exact little?

"A letter from Anthony!—oh, so cold, so formal!—but still a letter. And he arrived safely, and is well, and hopes that I 'have forgiven and forgotten.'

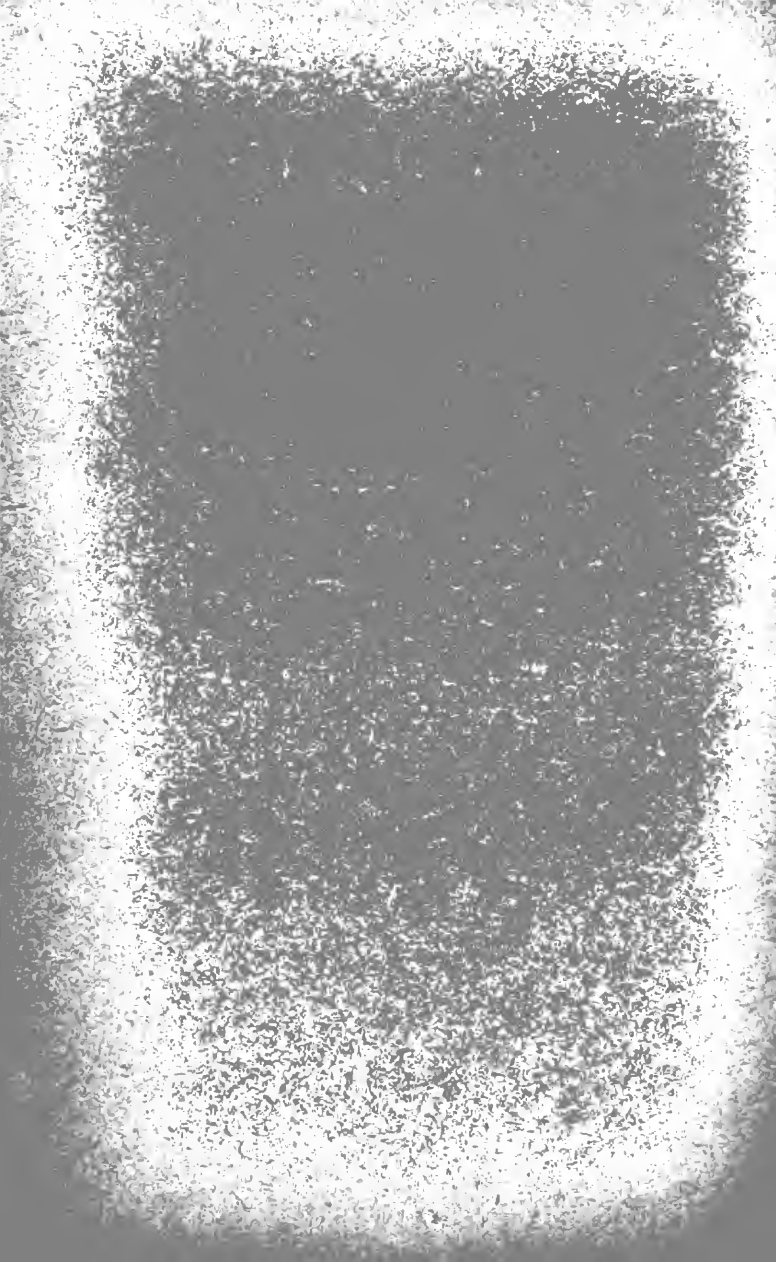
"Oh, Anthony, Anthony! I shall never forget, and, in my heart, I know that you need no telling. And you must know, too, that your name is ever on my lips in prayer—the last prayer at night, and the first when I awake.

"Surely, surely, one day the face that is so like a saint's in beauty shall be that of one devoted to God's service! Oh, there are so many



things I would like to write to you about, Anthony, but I shall never do so in this world again, for I have no right to anything that is yours. To dream of you, of the past, is a sin. But I can always lift my voice in prayer for you, and for myself, that strength may be given us to endure, and to do the right. It will be so hard, so hard, dear, never to hear from you, never to write to you, and you will think me cruel of heart, selfish, and cold; but whatever hard things you think of me you will be wrong, so utterly wrong that I could laugh at the mere idea of it, did I not feel such a longing to lie down somewhere out of sight and out of reach, and cry my poor, sad heart out.

"Perhaps *she* was glad to know that you were back in London again. Ah! God keep you from being unjust to her, Anthony, however keenly you are suffering! She has repented, even if she hasn't yet atoned. Perhaps she understands you better than I do, as she knows you so much better. She appreciates, perhaps, all the noble qualities in you even more than I—a girl who knows so little of the world. What manner of woman she is I may never know; but if women won't try to be just to women, then the world is a very barren one to have to live in!" . . .



**I** SHALL hear your footfall echoes dying,  
Dying fast on the fragrant air;  
And the gate shall close as my heart is closing  
To all Life gave that was bright and fair!



## CHAPTER XXIX.

### Denzil's Tactics and Barbara's Doubts.

**I** THOUGHT I had got over it, but I haven't."

Dr. Denzil Lane was leaning against the mantelpiece in his surgery, smoking, and soliloquising. He was tired, but he did not sit down. He 'thought better,' standing.

"She has proved that she doesn't care a fig for me, and all common sense demands that I should put her out of my heart; yet I can't, try as I will. Since Fate has placed her in my path again, before my eyes day after day, whether I will or no, the old feeling for her has sprung into life stronger than ever. She has gained in every way since I saw her last; there is a new beauty of expression in her face, and there is more of the womanly woman about her. What a helpmeet such a girl might be to me here! How I would glory in teaching her, and in learning all the sweet and the gracious truths of life it is in her power to teach me. Shall I ever forget her as I saw her in that poor miner's cottage, asleep, with the little child against her breast, the tears still wet on her soft cheeks? And yet, I spoke almost rudely to her, when taking her away—rudely, for fear I should be too kind! How reproachfully those blue eyes looked at me! As long as they were looking at me, what did I care

—then, or now? I only know I can't stand being here much longer. To be forced to meet so often, and yet to drift further away from each other—to be in danger of sinking the old friendship in ordinary, every-day politeness,—I cannot take it quietly, loving her as I do! Perhaps I have been 'a laggard in love,' and deserve nothing better than indifference? Then, if so, I shall not cease to besiege the fort from this day forward.

“What can have changed her in so short a time? What is it that has fenced her about with a new dignity and unapproachableness—the little girl I used to romp with when a boy? For all I know, she may be engaged to some luckier fellow; but, if she were, Dreda would have found it out. Besides, it would have come to my ears by this. How could she be wooed and won in those out-of-the-way holes she has been in? Here, it is different. I suppose it was idiotic, but I felt confoundedly glad when that inventor fellow returned to London. Not that she saw anything of him. How could she? But most girls are romantic, and I suppose she still admires him as a type of manly beauty.” And he gave a dissatisfied glance at his own reflection in the mirror.

Then he put his hand into his breast-pocket, and drew forth a tiny Browning. It always opened of itself at 'A-Lover's Quarrel,' and he turned from the verse he had found Barbara

reading the day he first told her that he loved her, to the one before it, and read it with a half-smile:—

“Woman, and will you cast  
For a word, quite off at last,  
Me, your own, your You—  
Since, as truth is true,  
I was You all the happy past—  
Me do you leave aghast  
With the memories WE amassed?”

“Browning understood the heart of a woman—no one better—and he didn't stop short at pleading. There's a good deal of 'bounce' in those lines when you pull them to pieces,—yet, I suppose the 'woman' liked it. Barbara, you shall not put me in the background of your life,—for I am beginning to wake up, and I mean to make a big attempt to storm the castle!”

He sat down, and began to mentally draw up his plans for campaign—a flush on his brown face, and a light in his eyes that had been long absent.

Denzil had heretofore kept out of all social enjoyments 'as much as he possibly could; but, though it was generally understood that he need not be expected to accept half of the invitations that regularly reached him, still they poured in as a tribute to his profession, whenever there was anything 'on' in the town.

The first change he made was in this connection, and, whenever pleasure did not inter-

fere with duty, he began to be seen at every social gathering belonging to his special clique. Into this, partly because she was his friend, and partly because of her accomplishments and winning charm of manner, Miss Halliday was admitted; and, as she could not, without being considered churlish, refuse those who took an interest in her wellbeing, she was very often among the company he frequented.

At first he did not treat her any differently to what he had done on her arrival in Redtown, nor did he show any desire to be her escort to and from homely parties or places of amusement; but, by degrees, he put himself more in her way, sought her out, and when he found he and she were gradually getting back into the old comradely track, it happened as a matter of course that he often 'saw her home.'

Barbara could not but feel pleased, and almost happy, at the reunion. She had someone now to tell her thoughts to, to ask advice of, and to lean on as a protector. He was a different Denzil in many respects to the old Denzil. Still, he *was* Denzil, the quiet, the capable, the trustworthy. He always knew exactly what she meant, and he never presumed on any little burst of confidence. She told her girl friends that she looked on him as a brother, and when they smiled in derision, her heart grew hot with indignation within her.



Sometimes malicious feminine criticisms made her self-conscious, and then the young doctor would be puzzled and alarmed at her sudden withdrawal of the imparting of her girlish hopes and plans from his eager ear. But these abrupt silences of the heart did not last long. Youthful feeling will, and must have, its outlet, and at such times Barbara would enchant him more than ever, bubbling over as she was with all a girl's innocent vivacity.

He marvelled sometimes at the sudden fits of depression that would keep his 'friend' under dark clouds for days; but it was only by accident that he eventually arrived at the cause. The day that he did was the blackest for himself that he had ever known.

One afternoon, when riding slowly back from a case in the Black Ranges, he came upon Barbara sitting on a grey boulder, a little way in from the roadside, and half-hidden by the green, drooping branches of the tree behind it. He saw that she seemed to be studying intently what looked like a sheet of notepaper on her knee, and came to the conclusion that she was scribbling verse, for he knew the pleasure she took in such composition, and encouraged her in it.

The under-boy in him still came to the surface, and, feeling light-hearted after a successful operation, he resolved to play a practical joke upon her, so slipped from his horse, and—tying him to a tree with as little noise as possible—stole up

behind the young girl, and, suddenly stretching out his hand, seized what he thought was manuscript, crying merrily, "Deliver unto me, O poet, the music of thy soul!"

He was quite unprepared for the effect of his thoughtless action. With a white face and blazing eyes, Barbara pulled the paper from him. "Oh," she panted, "oh, how dare you!—how dare you!—Anthony's letter!" And, half-unconsciously, she clasped it passionately to her breast, as if she had recovered from destruction something living that was indescribably dear.

Then, meeting the look that was beginning to harden the bright face above her, her face flushed crimson, and hot tears of mortification rushed to her eyes. In her agitation had she betrayed herself?—and to Denzil, of all people in the world!

"It was silly," she said irrelevantly, her voice quivering, "very silly of you!—not at all—"

She paused, and he filled in the sentence with a ring of bitterness in his voice.

"Not at all dignified, not at all in keeping with my noble profession, you would say? Quite true; but, foolishly, for the moment I was a boy again. However, accept my sincere apology. I thought you were writing verses, as you told me you did most of such work out in the open air, and," glancing round, "under a tree. I had no idea I was intruding in such an unwarrantable manner on—on—"

"On what?" she asked, her blue eyes now fixed and still as turquoises.

"On what seems sacred ground," he said meaningly.

There was a tense silence between the two for some moments, then Barbara's breast began to heave, and, with a little pause between each word, she said, "It—is—'sacred ground.'"

"Then I can never be forgiven," he said, bowing with distant courtesy; "and I shall at once remove my unholy feet." And he walked away rapidly towards where his horse was feeding on the thick, sweet grass. He was just about to mount, when Barbara came up to him.

"Don't be foolish, Denzil! Of course it's all right, but you took me unawares, and—well, I suppose I lost control of myself."

"We'll let the matter drop," he answered, in a would-be careless tone, leading his horse along by the bridle.

Barbara walked meekly beside him, her eyes on the ground, her cheeks flushing and paling. A riotous breeze ruffled her hair, and sent curly gold-brown tendrils dancing round her head. The clear, sweet pipe of a minah filled the silence, and the air was fragrant with the breath of shrubs.

But Denzil was blind to the beauty of the day now. Where before he would have drawn in deep breaths of the exhilarating atmosphere, he

was breathing the long, deep breaths of pain that stab the heart.

So this was the secret of Barbara's indifference to him as a wooer? There was someone else, after all. It was a love-letter he had unwittingly touched. His fingers seemed to burn. 'Anthony's letter,' she had said! Who on earth was Anthony? The name seemed to strike some chord of memory, but did not fit itself to the sound of any surname he could think of. He gave a side-glance at Barbara. She was looking prettier than ever in her evident distress of mind, and that did not improve his condition!

**G**OD be good to you, darling, darling!  
God be good to you, come what may  
To the weary heart and the restless spirit  
That loved not "once," but must love for aye!



## CHAPTER XXX.

### The Parting of the Ways.

THEY walked along without a word, till the girl, feeling an hysterical desire to either laugh or cry, took refuge in the obvious and commonplace, and said, tentatively, "The Black Ranges have an individuality of their own on a day like this, haven't they?"

"There's a bit too much individuality in the world for me at present!" broke out Denzil, savagely kicking a stone before him; "and your world seems a bit wider and more populated than mine."

"Why, Denzil, whatever do you mean?"

Denzil stood still in the road; and his horse, nothing loath, stood still, too.

"What do I mean, Barbara? Perhaps it's just as well you've asked me. If you will give me an answer to what you have every right to consider an impertinent question, I will give you a satisfactory explanation of it and everything else. Tell me"—he put his hand on her arm gently, but his eyes, dark, compelling, were holding hers fast, and she could not look away from them—"tell me who is 'Anthony'!"

"You have no right to ask!" she flashed, on the defensive in a moment.

"Have I not?" he said. "I think I have—a little. Enough to expect a straightforward answer, from the girl who has never yet sullied her lips with a lie. I *must* know—for my own peace of mind."

His grasp on her arm unconsciously grew firmer. "Who is Anthony?"

The answer came, but so inaudibly that it was only by the movement of the lips that he guessed the name.

"Mr. Hagelthorne."

Denzil's hand fell by his side, and he turned livid.

"Hagelthorne! And you call him by his Christian name?"

The blood rushed into Barbara's face in a crimson flood. Why, oh why, had she been so foolish as to let the name slip! But she faced him bravely.

"I have answered your question, Denzil. I surely may now be permitted to ask you by what right you have presumed to ask it?"

"By all the rights of a heart that has never ceased to be faithful to you! By the right of a love that is strong, and deep, and true—a love that is my first, as it will be my last—love that shall never know change or lose intensity. But what is to you now? The mere expression of it is a wrong to the man you yourself love, and who, of course, loves you as dearly. But I must speak, though I speak too late. I asked you to



be my wife while still the child was stronger in you than the woman, and you refused me—definitely enough, I must allow! I have waited and hoped, and longed ever since for the sign of a change in your sisterly liking, and—a few days ago—I was fool enough to imagine I saw a softer light in your eyes whenever they met mine, and determined to delay no longer than a week or two before I again put my fortune to the test—to win you for my wife, or to lose you for ever. To-day I need no answer from you; for you have given it in such a way, unasked, that I shall never cause you pain by putting my feelings into words again. Barbara, one parting word! Are you engaged to Anthony Hagelthorne?"

By this time he was on horseback. His words had flowed quickly and hotly, and the girl had closed her eyes and winced beneath them as if they had been so many blows. But, for the time, he was blind to her visible suffering; and, as he asked the last question, he was startled at its physical effect, for Barbara's slight figure swayed as if she had lost all control over it, and she put out her hands in the pathetic fashion that suggests the blind.

In a moment he was again by her side, and reproaching himself aloud as 'a rough brute,' and seating her on the side of the road, had hurried across to the creek and brought her a drink of water.

She thanked him with a wan little smile, and asked him to go, and she would walk on afterwards; but this he would not hear of, and they went slowly townward, his last question unanswered.

But in the young doctor's own mind it was answered—in a way that gave him a sleepless night and found him in the early morning with bloodshot eyes and a throbbing brow. All night long he had tortured himself with one supposition and another, remembering always the look on Barbara's face at his second question. If her love for Hagelthorne—and he had no doubt about it—were returned, why had she not looked happy and proud as the average girl would, under such circumstances? He knew she did not wear a ring, but to outward show he would have attached little significance. She evidently corresponded with him, and his letters gave her apparently ample food for serious thought. A secret understanding between them, perhaps?—yet by nature Barbara was frank and open, if reserved over what she felt most.

Of one thing he felt certain, that nothing but reciprocity on Hagelthorne's part would cause her even in a girl's romantic dreaming to call him 'Anthony.' He blamed himself bitterly that he had not taken more notice of Hagelthorne in his private capacity when he had had the opportunity of doing so. True, his father liked and trusted the man, and had done homage to what

he considered his genius; but then his father never at any time had thought evil of anyone till forced to do so. Was it possible that Hagelthorne had won the girl's heart to gratify the vanity he, Denzil, had ever given him credit for, and then 'rode away,' to fill the gap left in her life by nothing more than the formal letters of a 'friend'?

At the thought his face had darkened, and his hands had clenched. Blacker ideas followed in its train, and, though he resolutely banished them, they did not fail to leave a sting. How little, after all, he knew of the inner self of this woman he had grown to love so devotedly! How blind he had been not to see that it was hidden grief, sorrow bravely borne, that had put the new and steadfast light in the deep blue eyes, and had given the beautiful mouth the sad and tender sweetness that allured him!

Whether Hagelthorne had acted, or was acting, as a man should act who had won the love of such a woman, she had suffered—was suffering,—and he could never rest till he had found out the why and wherefore of it.

Meantime, he could no longer stay in Redtown while she was there. He felt tired out, and to the marrow of his bones. It was necessary that he should take a holiday, and he would lose no time in seeking for a 'locum tenens.' The loneliest spot in Victoria would be welcome to him now—the further away from Barbara the better.

The romance of life was over for him for evermore, he thought. He would never marry, but devote his every energy to his profession, climbing up as other men had done, on his dead self. As he had told her, never again would he return to her side with words of love upon his lips. He would always watch and see what the years brought her of joy or woe—her friend always, but a friend far off.

For the next few days Barbara saw nothing of Dr. Lane, then she heard that he had gone away for an indefinite time, and a Dr. Selwood had taken his place. Desolation filled her soul, and she felt as if her burden was greater than she could bear. The vision of Denzil in suffering obscured the vision of Anthony as she had seen him last, and she learned the lesson that there is no end of what the heart's capabilities are for niching, and paying devotion to, the lovable attributes of those who have at any time touched its harp-strings.

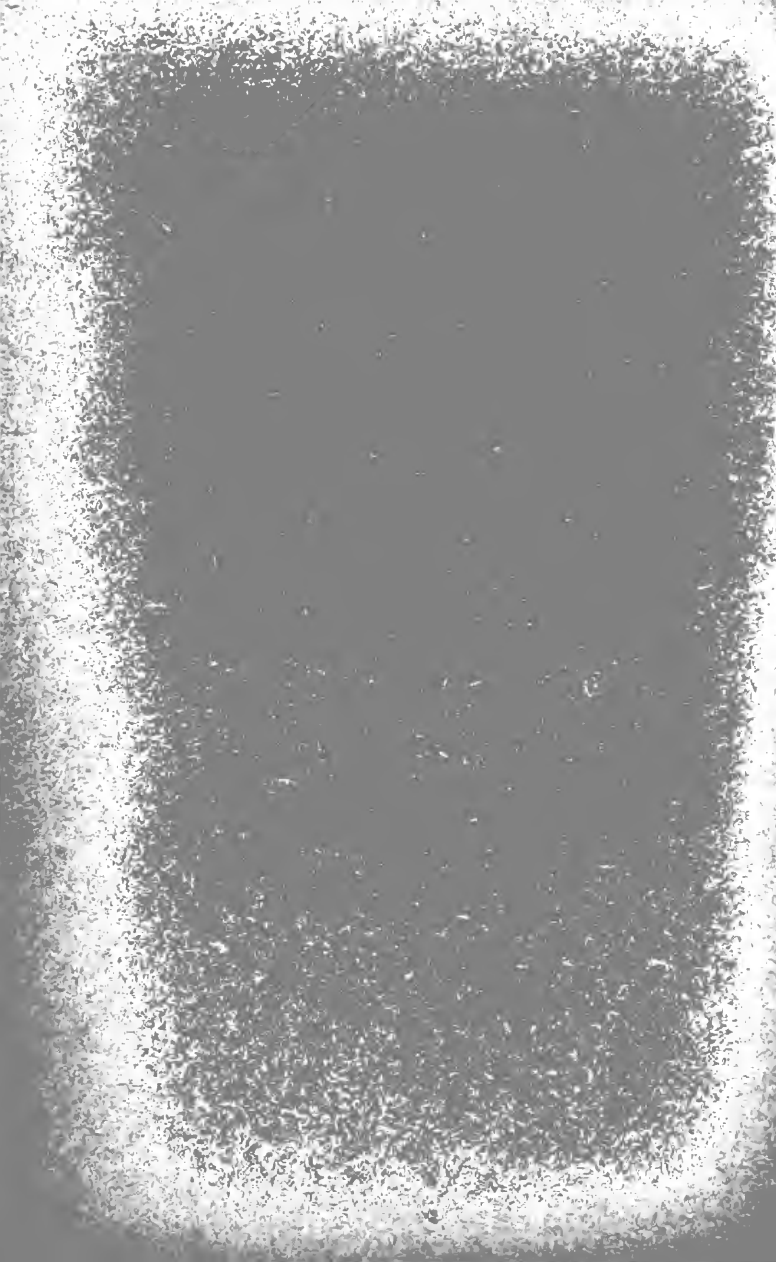
And she was to miss Denzil more and more each day. She missed the books he used to lend her, the flowers he was accustomed to send her, the arguments she had been wont to have with him over the questions of the day; she missed the sound of his pleasant voice—in singing, as in speaking—his hearty laugh, even his whistle to his dogs. But, most of all, she missed him as her escort after concert, ball, or party, as also the many chivalrous little attentions which she

had taken from him gladly enough in the old spirit of comradeship,—never thinking for a moment that he might look on her complacent acceptance of them as encouragement in what she now recognised was his new manner of courtship.

It did not console her to know, either, that any other girl in Redtown would have been only too proud of the young doctor's homage—that he stood out in his honest manliness and seriousness of purpose as a shining light compared with the many male flirts of her and other girls' acquaintance. But what could anything matter when there was Anthony?—Anthony, who had brought love into her life, and love's most bitter pain!



**T**HOUGH with tears, across the years,  
We crave for all that Life endears;  
Ne'er shall we follow o'er vale and hollow,  
The sweet fairy music that ravished our ears!





## CHAPTER XXXI.

### Dreda Pridhall Lifts Her Cross.

**T**HEN you refuse—absolutely refuse—to apologise to Madam Bosanquet?”

“I absolutely refuse! Moreover, I shall continue to ‘cut’ her whenever; and wherever, I meet her.”

Percy Pridhall’s plain face grew distorted with rage. There were times when he could scarcely keep his claw-like hands off his stately wife,—for Dreda had learned to carry her tall, shapely figure with a measure of dignity one would not have expected from the hoyden schoolgirl of old. As it was, he made a sudden step forward towards her, as if he would fain strike her in her insolent beauty; but she returned his look proudly and contemptuously, and, controlling himself with a strong effort, he said, very slowly—

“What have you got against Madam Bonsanquet, may I ask? A lady who is the wife of one of my chief business friends, and who will not tolerate to be publicly snubbed by a woman who is not possessed of one-half of her beauty, wit, and—shall I add?—commonsense.”

“What have I ‘against’ her? Simply that she is the brazen leader of a fast set, who pride themselves on being ‘above’(!) the laws of either God or man; whose home life is a cloak for vicious

practices that ruin them, and all belonging to their clique—body and soul; who make a boast of destroying the domestic happiness of others, and whose entertainments afford every opportunity for the sinking of all moral responsibility. After Tuesday night's supper at the Bosanquet establishment, I don't think any woman—or man either—of decent feeling, could do other than I did to-day!"

"Oh! so *you* are setting yourself up as a censor of society!" he sneered. "When did this change come over the spirit of your dream? How Madam would laugh if she knew you were fitting yourself for a saintship! Ha! ha! I shall take care to tell her the little joke the next time I have the pleasure of her company alone. You are so flawless, you know; you set such a shining example to the rest of your charming sex, with your own cigarette smoking, wine drinking, card playing, and bewildering extravagance of dress! What better are you, with your puppy-dogs, your pampered body, your craving for other men's admiration, and your silly assumption of a cleverness that you don't possess, and never will! You think me a fool and a sot, but I can see more than 'a yard or two' in front of me, all the same. Bah! Women like you may win a man, but they can't keep him! What are you to me, anyway, but a figure-head in the home I was idiot enough to give you? I married you for your looks, but"—he laughed cruelly, showing his long, yellow teeth—"there's

precious little left of them now! Mark this, madam—I'll seek recreation with whom I please, and"—his hand closed viciously on the soft, white wrist—"you'll treat *my* friends as I please, indoors and outdoors, or I'll make you repent it, my lady, even if I have to drag you down into the dust—and *leave you there*. None of your heroics for me! The Bosanquets shall come here, and we'll go there, whenever it suits your husband; and you can at once make up your mind to act the obedient wife, and write that apology to Flo Bosanquet."

Seeing defiance in her face, he flung her arm from him.

"It may be a revelation to your tragic highness that, for a considerable time, I have been sick to death of the sight of your face! Why don't you go on the stage, clear out somewhere—anywhere—so that I may be rid of you?"

If he had wanted to see a change in his wife's expression, he saw one now; for, at his last words, all colour faded from her cheeks, and her eyes dilated—always a sign in Dreda of inward commotion. He saw he was in dangerous waters, so turned to go, saying, in an ordinary tone, "I'll send Hobson round to post that note, in an hour or so. Don't forget that your milliner's bill is in need of speedy settlement!"

He slammed the door as he went out into the hall.

Dreda stood looking at the door, as if it were a living thing, long after he had closed it—a peculiar expression on her handsome face.

She was dressed in a perfectly-fitting robe of cardinal velvet, that accentuated the blackness of her hair and the deep, redbrown of her large and long-lashed eyes. She was a beautiful and attractive woman, and she knew it; yet her heart was starved, her soul was faint within her. The very artistic loveliness of the room she stood in, seemed but to mock and gibe at her. For such a home as this she had longed, had striven, and given up the best she had to give; yet she was utterly unhappy and discontented—beside herself with misery, too, at times such as the present.

After a little, she drew a deep breath, and passed her hand wearily across her brow. Sinking into an armchair, she leaned her head against it, and her frame shook with the dry, tearless sobs that alone came to her in hours of pain.

“He is right! Percy is right! I am no better than these women I loathe. What have I done for anybody? With what do I fill my existence? More than half of it is spent in so-called pleasure. I go to all the races, to every play at the theatre, to every ball worth appearing at, to opera and fashionable concert; I ‘do’ the Block, or drive round in my own carriage; I ride to hounds, and I flirt and dress as outrageously as position will permit; am the first to wear the latest costume and the most bizarre millinery of Fashion’s

changeable decrees,—and what do I get out of it all? Nothing but disgust and dryness of soul and heart! I would give all I have gained in worldly comfort and ease to be again a simple girl on the dear old hills where I spent my childhood.

“Oh! to feel the mountain wind on my cheek again—the wind so fragrant with the scent of musk and sassafras! To hear again the ‘Oo-ee, oo-ee,’ of the lyre-bird from her place of hiding, and the lonely note of the curlew as he flies beneath a darkening sky! Was there ever music like the singing of the waters in Drury Creek? Like the organ-chords of the waterfalls far out beyond the Left Hand Branch? Oh, for a drink of the cool, sweet water from ‘the Springs’—water that gushes from the rocks, as pure as love from the heart of a little child! It would cure the fever in my heart and brain, and help me to think—and, perhaps, to bear!

“Beebo has been wiser than I; she still keeps the freshness of those early years. I cannot write to her as I should; she may read ‘between the lines.’ And Denzil—what would I not give to have a talk with Denzil!—though perhaps rebuke and just reproach would be my portion did I let him know how I rebel, body and soul, against the lot I chose for myself—repulsing his kind brother-hand when he would have saved me from it. I have not even my husband’s affection and respect in exchange for all I bartered. Ah! if he

only knew, if Percy only knew, how he cuts!—what suffering is mine when I see the dislike, the almost hatred, in the face of one I hoped at least would be a comrade on life's way!

“The thought of the future is one of fear and horror. No hold on a man who has neither religion nor principle to restrain him, no hold on a man who has money enough to satisfy his every appetite, his every craze! I have seen the homes of happier girl-friends totter and fall to the ground like a pack of cards; I have seen them themselves deserted and left to struggle on as best they may with the helpless children of the man who should have been proud to be their father. What guarantee have I—a childless wife—of immunity from misery such as theirs?”

The scent of a bowl of roses on a table near by, floated across to her, as she lifted her head and sat staring fixedly before her—floated as if the spirit of the flowers were breathing a message of sympathy, of comfort, of hope; and the door opened quietly—to admit, to her surprise and exceeding joy, the brother whom she had been craving to see.

“Denzil!”

She gave a cry that came straight from a burdened heart—making his heart bound with fear—and was by his side in an instant, clinging to him hysterically and rapturously, while he—amazed at such a depth of feeling on his sister's part—

put his arm kindly about her shoulders, and led her back to her seat.

"Silly young woman! So Brother Denzil is a welcome visitor, then, though he is a crusty old bachelor? I thought you led too gay a life to be bothered with me! I asked for Pridhall, but was told he had just gone out,—which is all the better, if you want to have a talk. You look neither as well nor as happy as Mother led me to believe. Have you been quarrelling with hubby?"

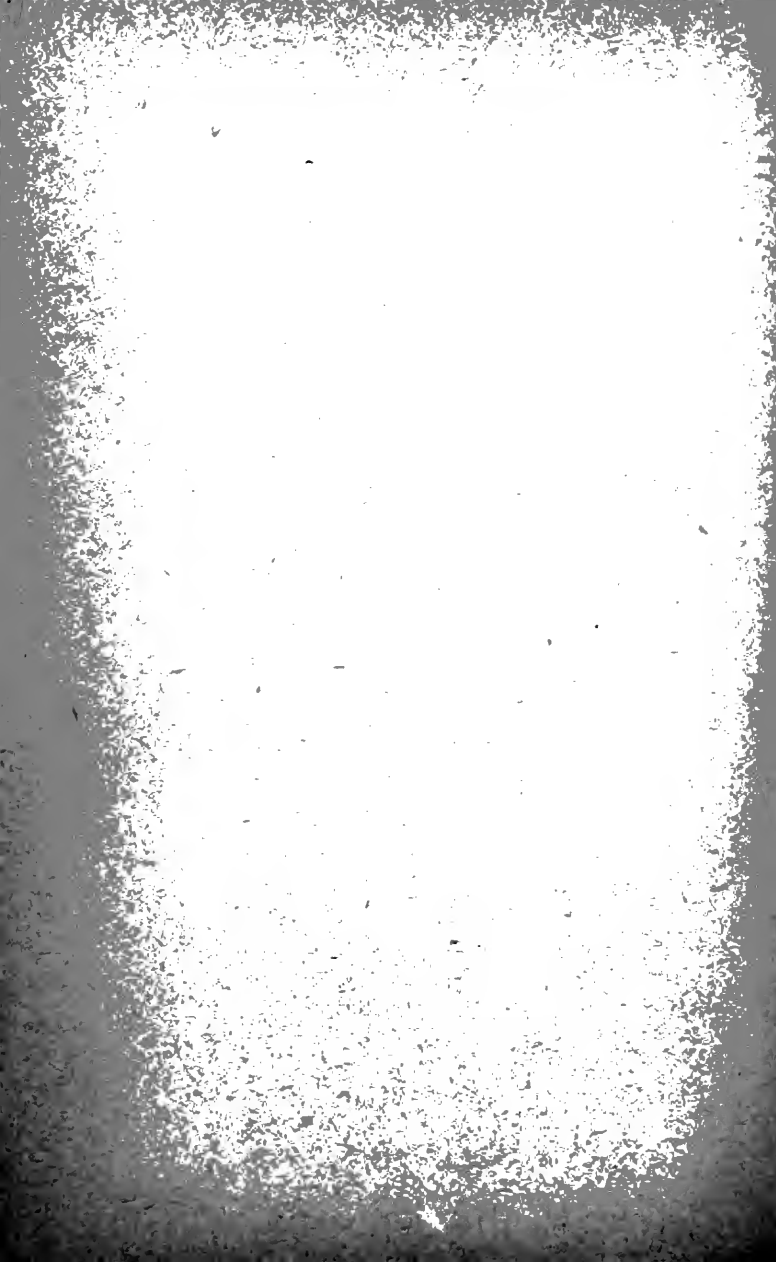
"Oh, it's not our first quarrel, by any means! Oh, Denzil, you have just come in the nick of time. I never needed your advice more than I do now!"

"Well, well; you shall have it, sister mine. No, don't ring for refreshments yet! Say whatever you wish to say while you have the opportunity, and I shall be a patient listener."





I FEEL the`spirit in me rise  
Above Life's sombre moods,  
As though some angel bore me up  
To higher altitudes!



## CHAPTER XXXII.

### Denzil's Story.

**D**REDA was only too glad to obey. Once started on an explanation of her depression of spirits, her words poured out like a flood, and she had soon a picture before him that saddened while it troubled.

At his first words of sympathetic interest, when she had concluded, a shower of natural tears relieved the tension on her brain. Denzil, glad to see them flow unrestrainedly, soothed her, after a little, by promising to "fix up" the Bosanquet matter so that she should not have to endure any humiliation in that direction, and also made a mental vow to himself that he would "straighten up" his brother-in-law as well.

"I intended to leave town to-morrow, but I shall stay here for a day or two, after all," he said. "It is time I saw more of Pridhall, and it will do you good to know that I am about, as well. You must face your worries, Dreda, as thousands of women have to face them every day; and, as you are fully alive to the fact that you have been fooling away your time, brace up your energies and find some object in life to expend them on. I always thought you were meant for better things, and now I am sure of it;

so take my advice and never let any man have the power to wreck your life."

"Oh, how good you are, Denzil! How I wish you had got married; you would make some nice woman an ideal husband."

"The 'nice' women don't seem to think so, my dear," her brother said, smiling grimly.

"Well, I'm sure Helen isn't a bad sort."

"She's not the 'sort' for me; so don't be flinging that young lady at my head—if, indeed, she'd be an accessory to such an act, which I very much doubt."

"But—Denzil—do you mean to say you have never been in love?"

"Well—no—I fear I cannot deny the 'soft impeachment,' but—" He paused, and raised his eyebrows.

"You mean she wouldn't have you? Oh, Denzil! Then she must have been some flighty or disagreeable little chit you are better without!"

"Not so. She is a grave, studious little girl; pretty—even beautiful at times; good in the highest sense of the word; very lovable, or I should not love her; sweet and womanly, yet not perfect,—inasmuch as she has refused what is perfection in your prejudiced eyes!"

"Oh! you're only jesting, after all!"

Denzil sighed heavily, and threw his head back against the cushions of the sofa.

"No; I am not jesting, Dreda. I wish to Heaven I were!"

Dreda looked at him intently, and noticed, for the first time, that his face was thin and worn, and his eyes sad and heavy.

"Oh, poor old boy! I *am* sorry. I don't wish to probe the wound if it's recent, but is she a resident of Redtown?"

"She lives there at present."

"It's a wonder Barbara never—" She knitted her brows together, and her face clouded.

"It—it surely isn't Beebo, Denzil!"

"It—or rather she—*is* Beebo, Dreda."

"The little minx! How dare she refuse *you*! Why, you're—"

He silenced her with an uplifted hand.

"Not nearly good enough for her," he said, with dangerous quietness. "I didn't intend to tell you anything about it, Dreda; it was only your own suffering that drew the fact from me. Now that you do know—or, rather, have guessed—perhaps I shall do well to make a confidant of you; Barbara may need all your friendship and affection yet."

In as few words as possible, he told his sister of the episode on the road from the Black Ranges. She started when he mentioned the name of Anthony, and he saw that she was quite prepared for its conclusion. True to her nature, she was both indignant and pitiful at once, and denounced Hagelthorne in no measured terms.

"And," she said, "something tells me he is a married man. I had that idea from the first, and

shall never be surprised if it is correct. I can find out for certain by hunting up Clare Roselli. She came back from England only last week, and I recollect her saying to Mother, when she was out to see her the other day, that she had run across him in London just after his arrival. She is the most inquisitive girl I ever knew. You may be sure she had ferreted out all she could about him by the day she sailed!"

"A woman's gossip isn't worth much," Denzil said carelessly. "Still, it might be wise to bring Hagelthorne's name up, in the course of conversation, and see what she has to say. I am not anxious to hear anything against him—for Barbara's future's sake,—but I confess I'd like to be positive as to his treating her as such a girl deserves to be treated."

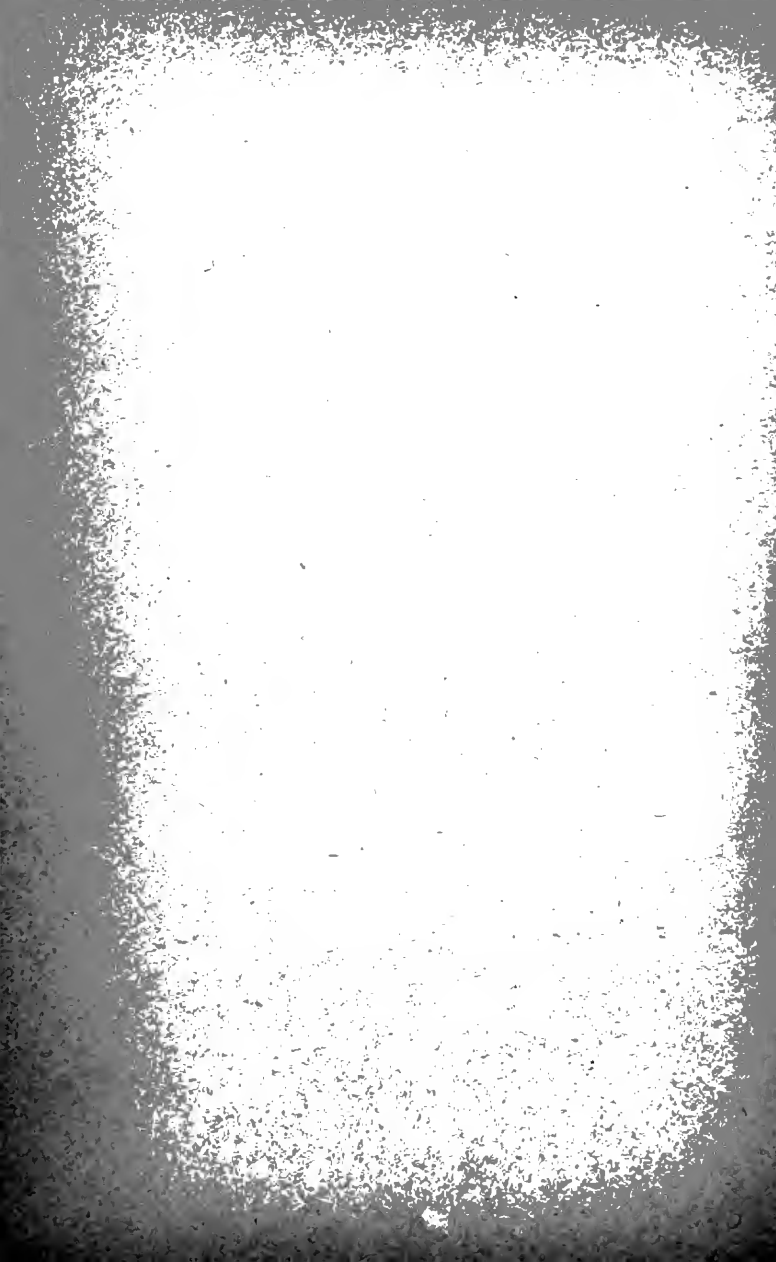
"And if your certainty happens to turn the opposite way?" asked his sister, not mockingly, but half in fear.

Denzil's face grew white and set.

"Then," he said, rising to leave the room, "it will be an ill day for Anthony Hagelthorne when I find him out, as find him I will."

Dreda followed him into the dining-room, rejoicing in his strength as much for her own sake as for her absent friend's. All fear of her husband had flown for the time. Her wrist still ached, but there was ease at her heart, and a great resolution to make what was left of her life something more worthy of her father's name.

**B**ACK to the pure, fern-haunted streams,  
Whose secrets they keep well,  
Who watch in sheen and shade beside  
The spirit of the fell.





## CHAPTER XXXIII.

Dreda Pridhall to her Friend, Barbara Halliday.

Cherry's Point.

**M**Y Dearest Beebo, — You will probably be surprised at the locality-heading of this epistle! Yes, my dear, I am actually here again among the mountains—trying the ‘rest cure’(!) under Denzil’s supervision and my mother’s salutary, if somewhat dictatorial, discipline. And the ‘simple life’ is agreeing with me splendidly. The length of my walking exercises increases daily. I have climbed all over the ‘Evening Star,’ which is left lonely in its declining days—a reminder of our own probable fate—but is still as interesting as ever; and from its summit I have looked down with mingled feelings on the little town beneath, where we played as happy children, argued, ‘weren’t speaking,’ and ‘made up friends’ again! How much prettier the Point seems to me now!—with its river flowing through it like a silken, silvery band, hills rising around it on every side, and away to the east and west as far as eye can see,—some with the gleaming green of gum-tree, lightwood, and wattle,—others rough and rocky, with here and there a happy, babbling rill. I have spent days trying to paint the young gum-leaves, the tender baby ones,

with the light of the sun shining through their lovely, indescribable brownish-red—and striven in vain; but, at any rate, in the endeavour, I have swallowed enough of oxygen divinely pure, to keep me in health for the rest of my life!

“I have walked to Mount Matlock and seen its magnificent peaks covered with snow—have even stayed all night in a roadside “shanty” there—that I might not fail to see the sunrise which tourists rave over. And its rising was indeed a sight worth seeing! I shall never forget how I felt as those masses of snow on those grand old heights became gradually tipped with the glorious pink of “the rose of dawn,” and the gradually deepening light spread onward and outward like a living, breathing thing. At last I knew what a small, contemptible creature I was, what a puny, egotistical unit, daring to rebel and criticise where I should have fallen on my knees—knew how I had been wasting the wonderful hours of the great Creator in folly and idleness. And yet, on that sudden sense of humiliation and abasement came the strangest, most delightful feeling of exhilaration I have ever known!

“Denzil says it was the uplifting sense of man’s immortality, but Ma says it was simply because I was drawing ‘decent air’ into my lungs at a ‘decent hour.’

“I have visited Dooley’s Creek, and struggled up the Never-Mind Hill at imminent risk of life

and limb (all for your sake!), and seen the Sir John Franklin mine, had a cup of tea at McNamay's, and carried home from their hillside garden the loveliest basket of flowers Art and Nature combined, ever produced.

"I have gone round to all your 'old women,' and given them glowing accounts of you,—and taken heaps of affectionate messages for you in return from them and their numerous progeny. Ma loves parading about among the old identities, in her costliest attire, and speaking in her loftiest and most condescending language; but, all the same, she is often touched, in spite of herself, by the reminiscences *re* dear old Dad that she hears as she goes.

"I have also paid a visit to Three-Trees' Hill, where Denzil used to set opossum and kangaroo-rat traps when a boy; and he laughed heartily when I recalled to him your power as an eloquent pleader for the lives of each and every captive that was delivered into his hands.

"I have numerous pieces of "crystal" for you among my belongings,—as well as other little relics of the past. I feel a new woman up here, and only hope the feeling continues, for I was sick to death of the world and all in it before I came. And it was such a relief to get quite away—and alone,—for Ma and Denzil don't count. I wish you were with us, if only to help cheer up poor old Denz., who walks about with a face as long as a bandicoot's, and doesn't eat

half enough to keep such a wilderness of a man alive!

"He admits that he has been 'crossed in love,' and I only wish I could lay my hands on the foolish woman that slighted him,—but she gets her deserts, in that she has lost as fine a character of a man as ever trod God's earth—though he *is* only Dreda Pridhall's brother. He is just father all over again. He spent a whole day with *your* father before he left town, and your own good Dad couldn't say enough in his praise afterwards.

"You should have seen him helping your father along, who is so crippled with rheumatism of late—he just looked what Mr. Halliday's son might have been; and your mother thought so, too, I know; for the tears were in her eyes as she watched the pair going out through the gateway together. Denz. is so gentle, as well as strong, you see, and so tactful and considerate where elderly people are concerned.

"I told Ma I thought Denzil had had an unhappy love-experience, and she at once boomed out, 'My dear Etheldreda, can you possibly be in earnest? I'd like to see the young person that would have the impertinence to look down on *my* son as a suitor for her hand!'

"You may imagine that I let her think I was only jesting, after such a 'crusher' as that! But, seriously speaking—you are a safe con-

fidant, I know—Denzil is taking the blight on his affections too hardly for my peace of mind as a sister. I can't *bear* to see him sad. Were I in his place, I wouldn't give the foolish little creature, whoever she is, another thought! There are plenty of sweet-natured girls in the world to choose from, as well as hosts of pretty ones. (He wouldn't "look" at poor Helen, more's the pity for himself; for she would have simply worshipped him all the days of her life.) I have two or three in my mind, but must wait patiently till 'Richard is himself again,' before I experiment on his heart—or what's left of it!

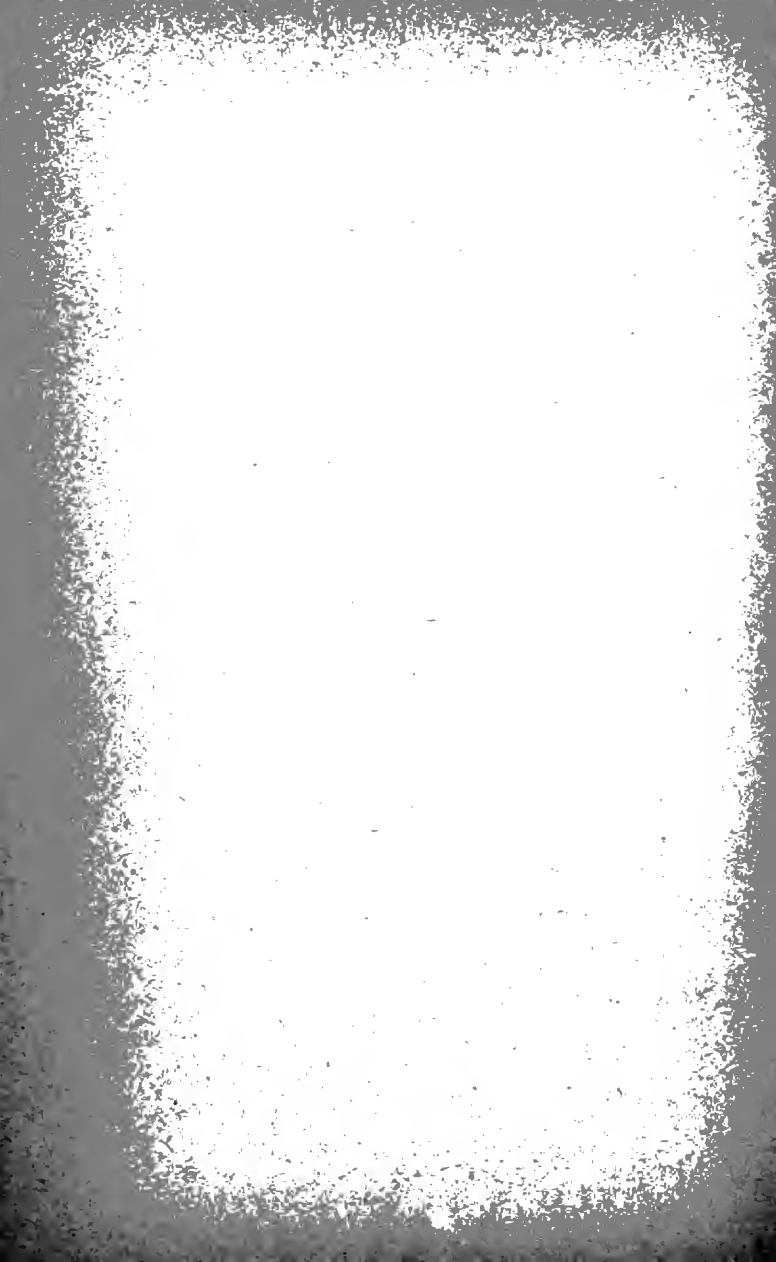
"Just at present, he is mooning round Drury Gully; he goes for a stroll there every morn before breakfast, and every night after tea. The Gully is certainly a beauty-spot, but there are plenty of other gullies just as fascinating, and nearly as near. I found him over there once, sitting 'like a lone heron on a gray stone,' and he got as red as a parrot's breast—just for all the world as if he had been caught doing something he shouldn't have done! I asked him was he sonnetising to the 'yabbies,' and he threatened to drown me there and then if I said another word; so I went off in search of more entertaining company, and got it at Mrs. Box's, on Picadilly Flat. Cream and honey and hot scones were more in my line than musing on the might-have-beens or better-not-have-beens of life! As Denzil gives me heaps of silver to strew for him

wherever my steps deign to tread, I feel quite a fairy godmother—a novel sensation for me!

“Denz. is quite enamoured of the Point. You’d really think every stone of the place was dear to him. Yet he didn’t spend half the time we did in it, long ago.

“Your old home saddens us, Beebo, girl; for the ivy that made it so picturesque is all pulled down, and the face of the garden is entirely changed. Vandals have set foot in the orchard, and nothing is left of what made the home a picture to see. Never mind, girlie! It is only typical of our own lives. Nothing, nobody, can stand still. Havoc reaches us all. Memory is the only beautiful thing ever left us of what love hallowed, and friendship enshrined. *The heart has its ivy still, Beebo, and the soul its own garden. . . .*”

L IKE perfumed censers in the breezy air,  
The dark boronia's branches wave again;  
The sassafras's creamy goblets bear  
Their odorous burden of sweet honeyed rain!





## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### Matrimony and Kindred Themes.

**W**E shall not be here now more than a day or two longer. We have a kodak with us, so you shall have the benefit of most of our snapshots. I am sorry Denzil's holiday is coming to an end, but, of course, he has been away quite a long while now, and—it doesn't pay to be forgotten.

"I hope you haven't lost your heart to the 'locum,' because, though he doesn't look it, he is a married man. A girl friend of mine, about your age, has been foolish enough to fall in love with "an appropriated blessing," and is now in sackcloth and ashes because of it. Like many other men, whose egotism gets the best of them, he hid the fact of his having a wife he was ashamed of; and, though he must have gone out of his way to attract my friend's devotion to himself, and, also, must have clearly seen that she was giving out all the treasures of her true little heart to him, he did not say the few words which would have saved her from years of pain and humiliation and helped him to regain his self-respect later on.

"Then the time came when, to save unpleasant complications, he had to tell her—too late for both!,—for, by then, he had come to care

for her more passionately than she cared for him, the consequence being, of course, that they had to part,—for she is a good, religious girl. She has fretted herself ill ever since, imagining all sorts of suffering for him—a wrecked life, etc.—while he, on the contrary (as told me by a friend who saw him twice, in the company of his wife, at fashionable entertainments), is looking ‘in the pink of condition,’ and going on with his work as earnestly as ever he did.

“I have no doubt *he* suffered, too, mind you!—but only for a brief time as compared with the dreary round of days and nights she has gone, and is going, through. Men are so different from women,—and, anyway, no matter how a man and wife quarrel, or how much they seem to detest each other—and even firmly believe they do—there’s that “something” which binds them invisibly still; and, however bad the husband may become, he cannot forget that the wife *is* his wife, “all said and done,” and he goes back to her sooner or later—if she will let him.

“If I were in Parliament (as I may be when woman’s **millennium** comes!), I’d not only have married men chained to their responsibilities, but I’d agitate for a law to be made for the thorough shaking of the credulous women that take men on trust!

“Oh, I’ve learned a lot since you saw me last, my dear Beebo! and have come to agree with

Denzil that a woman's first duty is to *respect herself*, just as a man's is—only *he* doesn't do it one-half his time. Ma says that the higher up girls place the inconsistent creatures on their hearts' pedestals, the quicker they will hasten to knock it down for their adorers—and, the idol once broken, the sooner its scattered pieces are swept away the better. "*The pedestal can then be well dusted, and there is room for something more lasting!*" (N.B.—There's a good deal of truth in this bit of worldly wisdom of mother's. I'm not so fond myself of terracotta idols and golliwogs as I used to be!)

"To close this subject—for I'm not training to be a professional writer on 'Matrimony and Kindred Themes'—I shall give you Mrs. O'Dea's last oracular utterance on the sex in question:—

" 'Men, is it? Men? What do I think of them in regard to the 'old, eternal problem'? Just this, then: you may pinch and punch them, starve or rob them, flout or dare them,—but if you set yourself, the woman, high up, and them low down, and then set to flattering them from above their heads—yet taking all they can do for you as a small service at best,—well, 'tis *you'll* have the red side of the apple 'to the end of the world, an' after that!'" . . . .

"I fancy I hear you asking after Mrs. McKinstry? Business has gone down with the steady decrease in population (many of the mines have closed down), but she is still able to

make a living with the help of her boys, who are growing up strong as Samson on miscellaneous and germful diet; and she is still "as large as life," and just as placid-looking as ever she was. She speaks with pathetic dignity of "my daughter," and bewails the fact of her marrying so young, and "so much beneath her" (!), but "hopes and trusts" she will "keep an orderly household," and "shine in every domestic art."

"I was hypocrite enough to answer by saying that I was sure that, in that most praiseworthy line, she could not do better than follow in her mother's footsteps; and, though she seemed to quite relish the implied compliment (?), there was, at the same time, the queerest of little gleams in her eye, just as if she had seen the sarcastic little imp in mine, and was not annoyed, but highly amused. She informed me before I went that she "much appreciated" my hunting her up, and had always liked me from childhood for "the dare-devil" in me! So we are quits. (Needless to say, I didn't tell her how much of it had been belaboured out of me by the broomstick of Fate!) . . . .

"Well, dear child, it is late, and I have "talked" long enough to rob me of my beauty sleep—which I *do* have the chance of getting in "this Eden of the 'east';" so, farewell for the present. I shall expect as long a letter from you, in return. Your epistles have been rather brief, and dry, for a considerable while. For

goodness' sake, don't change, like the rest of one's friends are doing,—and not to their advantage, either. Never let the world get hold of you as it did of me, for you won't have any good Denzil to drag you away before your soul is seared,—as I have had. He came to me just at the proper psychical moment—only in time to save me from doing something wicked and desperate—and has continued to do more for me than I could ever explain, or you understand.

"Try and find out who that girl is who has refused him—she must live in Redtown,—and, when you do, perhaps you will also come across the man she prefers in his stead. Study him, for my sake, if you can, and let me know what manner of individuality is his who has so successfully ousted a loyal and high-minded lover like Denzil from the "girl of his heart."

"Good-night! I am enclosing some white everlastings for you that my brother picked far out on the hills.

"Heaven gave to yesterday

No flower more white, more pure than they."

You see I can be poetical, too!

"Yours, with more true love than you dream  
of, —"DREDA PRIDHALL."

. . . . .

Dreda gave a heavy sigh of weariness as she folded up her long letter, and enclosed it in its envelope. She had set herself a task whose

result she could not see—had guessed at much, and imagined much. But she had at least one fact to cling to—Anthony Hagelthorne had been twice seen with his wife by the Roselli's before they had sailed for Melbourne, and the relations between the couple had seemed cordial enough. His wife's story was not unknown, and it was a significant fact that he was bringing her out from an enforced retirement.

“She will get over it—poor old Beebo,—but the worst of it is, it will leave its mark upon her, as my own troubles have upon me.” And again she sighed heavily.

**G**OD be with thee," through all dangers,  
Through the war-clash of the soul!  
Through the floods of many waters,  
Through the storms that o'er thee roll!





## CHAPTER XXXV.

Where the Leaves of Fancy Fall.

(Barbara Halliday's Journal).

Autumn, 18——.

**D**EAR Mentor of the Long Ago,—It is months again since I have recorded here anything that has had to do with my life's history; and the lovely tints of autumn are on the leaves of the trees,—their red and gold reminding me of the bright hopes and fancies which are drifting away as they, too, must soon drift under the breath of stronger winds; but, as yet, there is a great hush over all the season's ripe and pensive beauty, and its calm extends to the once storm-tossed waters 'that surged over my own soul.'

"There were never-to-be-forgotten weeks when my brain seemed numbed, and incapable of gathering together, and properly assorting, all that was flung within it in crowded heaps of cruel facts; but of late I have taken up these plain truths of circumstance and examined them, one by one, carefully and collectedly, have put them in seemly order, and commenced to think—to reason—once again.

"Denzil misunderstood my friendship with poor Anthony, and went away on a sudden holiday without a parting word; and I knew, plainer

than anyone could have told me, that it was because he did not wish to see me again—or even to be in daily sight of me.

“So I applied at once for removal from Redtown,—urging such reasons as I truthfully could for the change; but, of course, I was obliged to wait my turn—which I did with a sorely aching heart. Whether at the blackboard, or facing my class, teaching singing, or drilling “my” boys, I seemed to see, and hear, Denzil through all; his presence was even more insistent than Anthony’s—perhaps because I felt that, in Denzil’s case, I have been more to blame.

“Yet, though we had drawn as near to each other again as in the “old Point” days, I was not prepared for his second avowal of a love the more appreciated because of its unswerving loyalty! I would not have caused him a moment’s suffering—nay, more, I would rather have lived in lonely obscurity all my days than have added one new pang to the pain of his faithful and generous heart. I would not have put myself in the way of drawing other than friendly notice from him; but accident accomplished all I would fain have avoided, and set us far apart—as far apart in spirit, perhaps, as in body.

“And I could not have told him Anthony’s life-story, even at the risk of entirely losing his trust and respect,—for Anthony’s secret was doubly sacred to me for all that had unwittingly led to its sad revealing.

“For days after Denzil had gone my peace of mind went, too, and I continually asked myself had I wrecked the lives of two men by my own stupidity and selfishness, vanity, and blindness? I was afraid so, though God knows the doing of it was unintentional!

“Denzil stayed away so long that gossips at last made out that I had ‘jilted’ him, and many a cold look I had to suffer from his friends, though in their hearts they did not really think me half good enough for him. It was only then I knew that the outside world had seen what I had been so blind to. I did not mind what people said, of course; because their knowledge was only based upon surmise. What I *did* mind was, that Denzil seemed to wish to show me that our friendship was altogether at an end, and that it could only mean constraint between us—and discomfort for him, in particular—were we obliged to live in the same town. I used to hear of him incidentally—he wrote regularly to his ‘locum’—and knew he was spending part of his holiday at Cherry’s Point; but that interesting fact had more power to intensify than to decrease my unhappiness. And, day by day, thoughts of his roaming at will about the dear old spots we both so fondly loved, *would* come, and often chanced to drive a dearer memory from my heart. . . .

“Then, one morning, I received a long letter from Dreda—by the same mail that had brought

my instructions to move on from Redtown to open a new school at Hurley's Ford,—and, in this letter of hers there was much that I had feared as to her brother's depression of spirits, and I felt as if nothing could stay my hand from at once writing to him and explaining fully all which must seem a convincing proof of my duplicity and folly! I could not bear to think he was misjudging me so cruelly. I felt, then, as if his good opinion of me were more worth the having than anything in this world!—more, even, than that of Anthony—which, something told me, I was never to lose, to the end of time.

“And I wrote pages of incoherency—and tore them up when the rush of feeling that had flooded my heart subsided, for instinct told me such a letter had more power to destroy than to rebuild.

“That afternoon saw me far away from Redtown, and I could not feel sorry; for was I not now out of Denzil's way?—no more to be an offence in his honest eyes. Oh, how well I knew how he hated deceit! How often I had heard him say that he could forgive anything sooner than the deliberate hiding of a truth from him. Ah! how those clear, dark eyes of his had searched mine the day I saw him last! He tried to read the soul—the heart—of his boyhood's friend, and fancied that he failed! I have lost life's sweetest gifts, and often I wonder why,—for, oh, He Who created me knows how my heart hungers for the

sacred love whose flame burns brightest in the safe fold of domestic life!

“Here, at Hurley’s Ford, there are green fields and gently-sloping hills—no grand heights, no glorious views, but there is a peace in its quiet, pastoral beauty, and the creek is wide and clear, and bordered by tall reeds and ferns and flowers. I can take the children out of doors for study in the pleasant mornings, and “point a moral, and adorn a tale” with the pretty happenings of Nature—from the whirr of a bird’s wing to the leaping of a trout in the sunlit stream. And, often, the children’s happy laughter blends with the musical babble of the waters and the gurgling of the magpies, or, with the minah’s briefer song. . . . .

“Before I left Redtown I had a long talk with Father Guilfoyle, and his advice to me I am endeavouring with all my strength to keep. But only God can tell how hard it is to put Anthony out of mind, save as a friend!

“If only I had not learned to love him so! If only I had known in time that he was not free to win my heart! Pride in his first notice of me sowed the first seed in my harvest of pain, and I suppose I deserved to suffer for my foolish vanity. I should never have agreed to a stranger’s regular correspondence with me,—but, oh, I was so lonely up in that desolate place!—and I am afraid I was always too romantic in my fancies, and too fond of the rose-coloured

clouds of illusion. Anthony was my "Lohengrin"; he seemed the perfect embodiment of my girlish dreams. Alas! like the hero of the grand old opera, he has sailed away out of my life for ever!—and all my cries and tears cannot bring him back—nor should they.

"Poor Dreda seems to have gone through some fiery trial of late; but there is, nevertheless, a bright, healthy tone about her letter which encourages me to hope for her that she will yet be true to the noble qualities in herself which she has always tried to smother.

And Denzil would, I know, be such a tower of strength to her in any crisis that might arise in her affairs—has already been, from what she says. Dear old Denzil!—with his grand and bracing manliness and straightforwardness of purpose!—how I wish I had a brother like him! It made the tears rise, scalding, to my eyes, when I read of his tender care of my father for the few hours he spent with him in town.

"As Dreda says, dear old Dad needs sorely the strong arm of a son! And Mother must often wish for someone with such a reserve of quiet strength and steadiness of disposition to rely on, especially when she is worried and cannot share her burden with the dear partner whose health is failing and who needs all her tender care.

"I have done 'my part' by my parents, dear Dan; but, after all, I am only a girl—myself worried, perplexed, weighed down, with none to

help me with my burden save Our Divine Lord. And a daughter, however fondly loved, cannot, I suppose, be to a father all that a devoted son can be. A good son is his aged father's safe confidant, and his deliverer from the cares that the world would still lay upon his shoulders. I wonder if Anthony was a good son? I think he must have been, or he would never have been so merciful to *her*, when she wronged him so cruelly. Ah, how often I wish, and wish again, for Aladdin's carpet—just to be transported for one brief hour across the seas, to see for myself 'how things are,' and whether he is doing his part as nobly as I ever pray he may do—putting duty always first!

"Every English mail day my heart grows sick—not with longing for what I must not have—but for fear that I shall get some news it may be hard to bear. With the exception of that first, short note announcing his arrival, I have not heard from, or of, Anthony. Perhaps he is already beginning to forget? Ah, no!—I cannot bring myself to believe that!—and I want him to always remember,—not for my sake, but for his own—for hers!

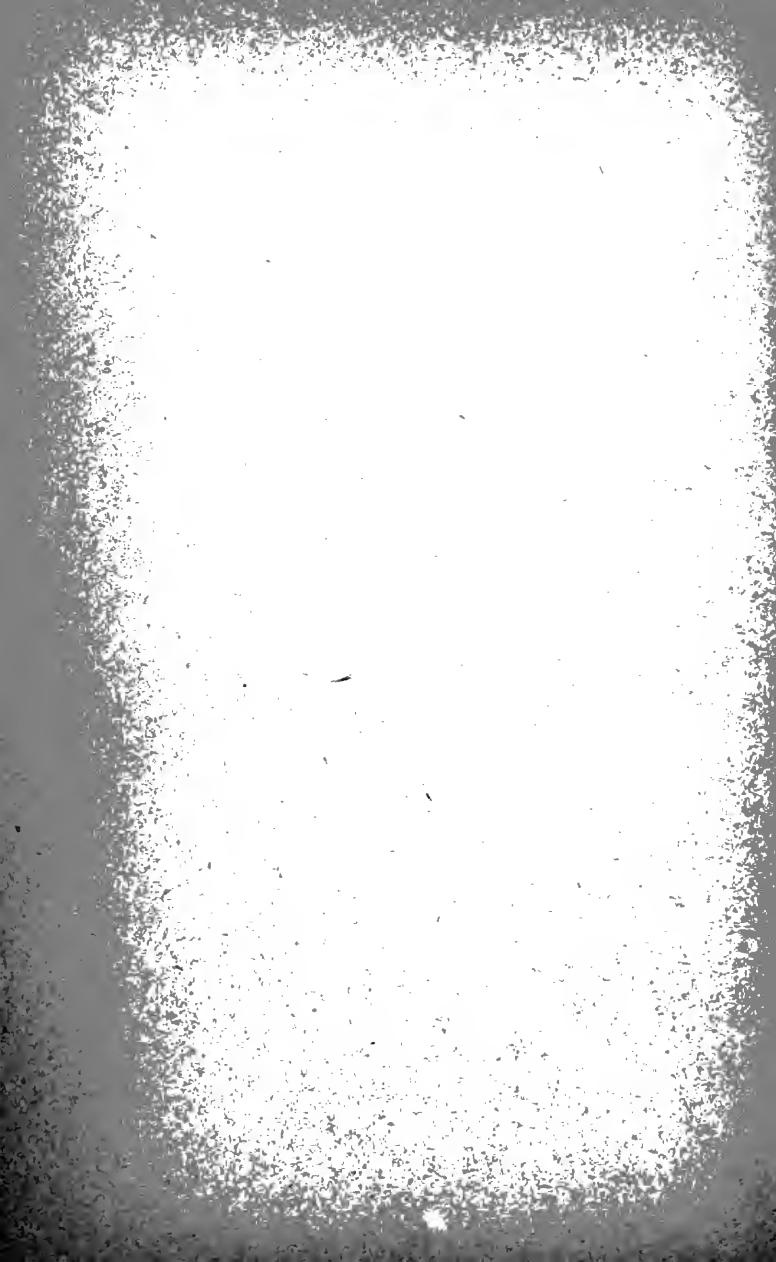
" 'He is her husband'; I say the words every night before I begin my prayers; and I say them again when I awake at dawn. I put my hands on them, I draw myself up by them, ere I can begin the labours of the day that is God's alone.

"To-morrow, again, is 'English mail.' I shall be glad when it is over."





**F**AREWELL ! Farewell ! Afar my boat must sail ;  
May fairer winds steer thine through every gale !  
Afar, or near, for evermore I'll see  
The sweet, true eyes that brought God's light to me !



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### "A Long Farewell."

THE mail which Barbara Halliday so much dreaded had, the following day, a letter for her:—

Blackheath, England, 18——.

"Dear Little Barbara,—(I cannot call you Miss Halliday as I ought, for to me you are, and shall always be, all that stands for childlike purity and the tender, lonely loveliness of the modest flowers of the mountains) I have had some strange experiences since I saw you on the eve of my departure from Australia for these shores.

"I left Victoria an embittered, hopeless man, humiliated in my own eyes, stripped of everything that made life worth living for,—with the exception of your guileless prayers. At one side of the world seemed joy and peace, bidding me their farewell; at the other, all that the heart would turn from,—and weariness and despair!

"On moonlight nights I walked the deck; seeing break from the snow-white clouds above me, a face never to be forgotten—knowing well that, as far above me as were they, so was her soul above mine! The stars were her dear eyes calm and bright—full of compassion, but *not of love that is of the earth, to perish with the earth*. The cool night zephyrs were her fingers, touch-

ing my cheek as might the child never sent to bless my restless life. In the voices of the waves at their gentlest was her sweet voice, petitioning for one who was not worthy of her prayers.

"Sometimes comfort fell on my soul as the morning dew upon a flower; but, oftener, the storm within me pushed and urged me to a speedy self-destruction that might end all,—stilling every surge of passion for evermore!

"All of this passed, in time, and numbness of heart and brain took its place. I was nearing my destination, and work—and duty—were awaiting me there. The few lines I sent you were all I dared trust myself to write—and I knew you would not expect more. I did not ask you to 'forgive and forget'; because I knew you had forgiven; and to forget was impossible for either.

"For me, there is but atonement.

"On my return, a note from my wife was awaiting me. She had been instructed in the teachings of your Church in my absence, and had become a practical member of it. As she was not sure of my own religious views, she wished to give up the allowance made to her by my lawyers with monthly regularity, and expressed her intention of earning her own living.

"There was sincerity in the tone of the letter, and something deeper, truer, more earnest than I would have expected. It touched me, and I felt proud of her. I thought of your words, and

wondered if I were to set my feet on what you consider 'the right road,' would it count for me—some time—somewhere!

"After a night's consideration of you—of her—and of many other things—I went down to see her at Blackheath. She had improved in several ways since I saw her last; but her timid humility at my unexpected appearance hurt me in a vastly different way to what it had done years before, when I was her accuser,—strong in my righteousness, and she completely at my mercy, as being a sinner even in the eyes of a careless world.

"On this second visit I was the transgressor, and she—had she known—might have loaded me with reproaches, and I would have been forced by conscience to sit silent in the tribunal of my own soul.

"As it happened, I was embarrassed; and she, seeing it, let her timidity give way to a kindly, womanly dignity, which sat well upon her. I regained my self-possession, though I had lost some self-respect, and our interview was not, by any means an unpleasant one. . . .

"Now, Barbara, I stand by her side again—never to leave her till 'death do us part;' and, in doing this, at least, true and pure-hearted little friend, I am doing right, and you will see that your last brave effort for my sake was not made in vain.

"Dear child, I shall cloud your bright pathway never again, but shall wait in hope for the day

when I shall hear that someone worthy of you has crowned your life with the happiness you deserve.

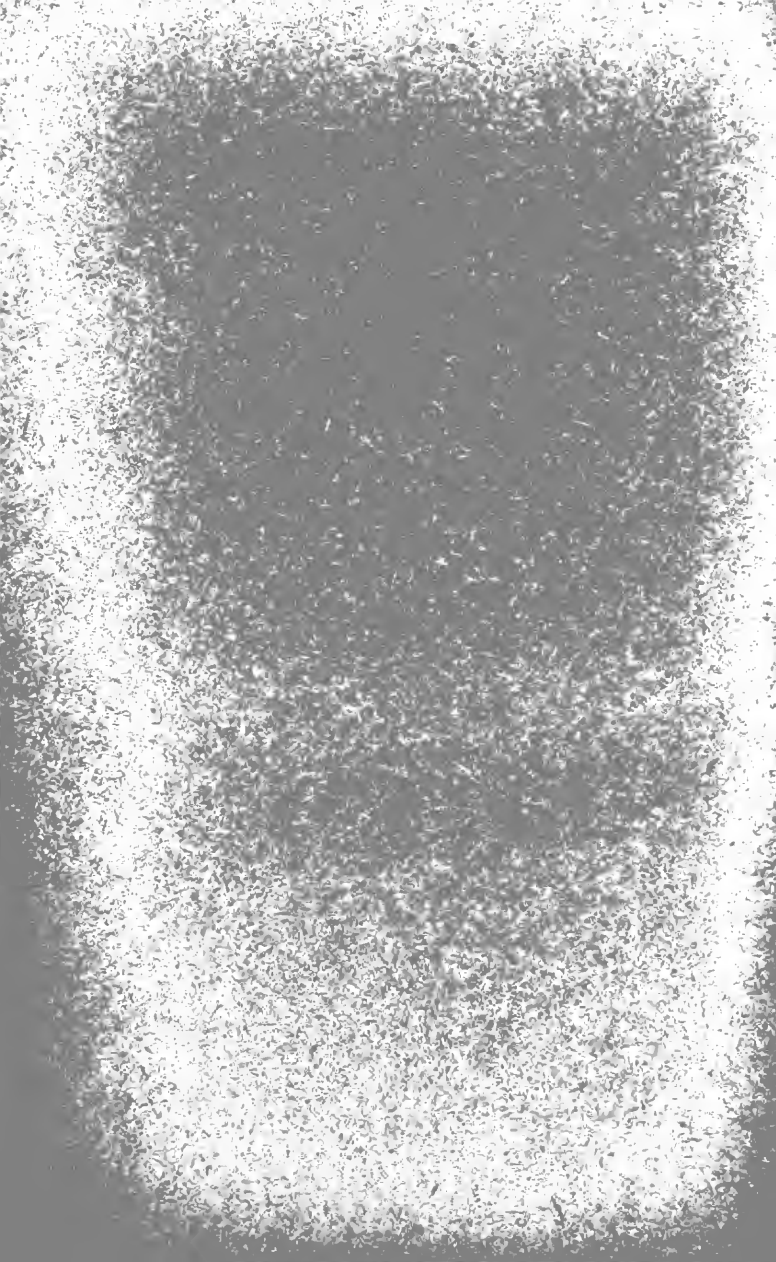
“Barbara—little Barbara—a long farewell!

“Forgetting nothing, I shall atone. Forgetting nothing, you shall forgive, and—one day—understand.

“Ever your friend, let me still be in your prayers,—

“ANTHONY.”

PEACE by the murmuring waters,  
Peace on the sunlit shore,—  
Yet ever and ever a backward look  
To the old glad days of yore!





## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### The Anchorage of the Heart.

**B**ARBARA HALLIDAY worked harder that winter than she had ever done in her life—not only at school duties, compulsory and non-compulsory, but as a writer of verse.

In the latter, she found a natural vent for her emotions, and it saved her from brooding over events calculated to make her dissatisfied with her lot; and there was also a pleasure in seeing in the weekly journals of the day thoughts of her own which might help to encourage others on the upward way she tried to tread.

She seemed to have a horror of being idle—saying to herself, when weariness of body demurred, that she was happier continually employed. As there were more boys than girls among her pupils, she taught “extras” after school—Latin, algebra, and book-keeping—and contrived also to give music and singing lessons to the daughters of the “cockatoo farmers” who could afford to pay the reasonable sum she asked.

But Nature, indignant at last, at this overworking of the faculties, began to take her revenge, and summer found the girl pale and hollow-eyed—a mere shadow of what she had been.

Dreda Pridhall, who had "run up" to Hurley's Ford for a few days, as it was not more than a few hours' journey from the city, was horrified at the physical deterioration in her friend, and wrote privately to her brother, Dr. Lane, whose heart grew hot within him with indignation at what he could not but think was "the work of that cad, Hagelthorne."

The love that he still felt for Barbara impelled him to go to her straight-way, and "have it out," as he called it—and ask her to at least confide in him as a friend and brother, and let him try to unravel what, to all appearances, was a very tangled skein.

But pride stepped in when the first glow of feeling had passed—reminding him of his vow never again to let her see that her happiness was so dear to him as to be indispensable to his peace of mind. He saw, too, that she was but doing as he was himself—centring every thought in work for the good of her kind—giving all she had to give of energy and capability, hoping thereby to forget what was certainly best forgotten.

She was overworking, of course, and that was foolish, and must be stopped. It was but six weeks from Christmas, and then her month's holiday would set her up. However, it might be advisable for her to have a fortnight's holiday without delay; and he read Dreda's characteristic letter again,—the result being that Mrs. Pridhall coaxed Barbara into going with her to seek pro-

fessional advice from the nearest local medical man.

Armed with his certificate, and Pridhall's grudging permission for a lengthened stay, she promptly bore Barbara off for three weeks to Ocean Grove, and affectionately compelled her to "dream on the sandhills, and sport with the waves."

The change from hills and fields was very pleasant to Barbara, who had seen comparatively nothing of the sea in her uneventful life, and she obediently lay for hours watching, and listening to, the waves as they advanced and retreated—ebbing gently, and almost imperceptibly, or rushing over each other in their wild eagerness to reach the shore. The sea breezes brought new life to her body, and braced her soul, and the murmuring of the waters on placid days was a lullaby to her sore heart.

Dreda, as might be expected, proved the most cheerful of companions, and the bond between the two women increased and strengthened day by day. They were, as Dreda said, "like sisters"; and once, at the words, Barbara's pale cheeks had blushed until they were like the heart of the La France rose on Dreda's breast, and she turned away her head, ashamed at the idea her heart persisted in suggesting,—wondering whether the ignoble adjective "fickle" might, indeed, be truthfully applied to herself!

Dreda had seen the blush, and had smiled shrewdly. She would "take care," as far as she was able, that Barbara didn't make "a hash of her life and Denzil's!"

She tried every feminine art known to her to induce the young girl to make a confidant of her, but in vain. However, she was content to "bide her time." It might not be long before "one of the family" would be told whatever there was to tell.

There was nothing discreditable to Barbara in the story, even if it were "a love-story"—of that she felt certain.

"The 'sad sea waves' are bringing the colour back to your face," Dreda cried one afternoon, when the two were sitting on the sand as usual—Barbara book in hand, Dreda with some fancy work which was nearing completion. "Thank goodness you are not like Helen! We came down here once to get over too exciting a round of balls and other dissipations, and, in a day or two, she informed me that she would go 'melancholy mad' if I persisted in sitting within hearing of the waves! She couldn't understand my glorying in their wild roars on stormy days, in my joy at watching them dash themselves against the rocks and sending out sprays of foam. She thought a sea-gull 'the ugliest bird she had ever seen,'—and, as for these perfect little shells, she saw no beauty in their delightful little curls and twirls.

"In a week the colour had faded from her cheeks as fast as the red from the flowers in her hat. She grew quite bad-tempered, and refused to admire anything about the place. Sunset on the sea—always a glorious sight, I think—only reminded her of Arabs, and camels, and dry old deserts; and moonlight on the waves only served to give her 'the creeps!' So, with a shrug of my shapely shoulders, I ended in taking her back to the Babylon where she fain would be."

"And I—I love the sea!" Beebo said softly, tilting back her shady mushroom hat, and gazing dreamily over the shimmering expanse before them. "It consoles and sustains me, it encourages and uplifts me. And, oh! its changeful beauty! Whether calm-breasted, in the grey of a still and brooding day, or sparkling in the sunlight, and dotted with white-sailed yachts, or dashing itself in fury while the winds rave above it, or creeping quickly up, up, over the yellow sands, murmuring its secrets to the shells, I love it always!—and shall never forget these days of close and satisfying communion with it."

"Humph!" said Dreda, "I don't know that I have quite such a passion for it, yet I own to feeling a sort of kinship with it when it lets itself 'go,' and shows it is something to contend with, able to inspire fear and wholesome terror, and that it is not a thing to be trifled with when foolish mortals please. I daresay there's a bit of the true virago in me!"

"There's plenty of 'spirit' in you, I know, dear old girl! What a grand leader you would have made!"

Dreda sighed.

"I *am* a leader—of my own 'forlorn hope,'" she said. "But perhaps, one day, I shall find something more worth the doing. And, then—I shall not hesitate to lead, when you are ready to follow!"

"I'm ready to follow you at any time, Dreda, if the cause be good."

"Well, to be candid, I wouldn't thank you for 'following' me while you are a spinster, my dear! I'll wait till you are married before I start my campaign, and then we two will set to work and try to right some of the wrongs in this wicked old world of ours."

Barbara's sensitive face flushed, and she ran her fingers through and through the grains of sand at her feet.

"Then, Mrs. Pridhall, I'm afraid the waiting will be long!—for I have not the slightest intention of marrying."

"Perhaps you are going to become a nun?—in which case——"

"No, no! I have no vocation for a religious life. I only wish I had. I just mean to do the best I can on the lonely track I am traversing—helping all, hindering none, and asking for nothing."

"H'm! Well, *I* mean to help some, hinder more, and ask for a great deal."

“ ‘Hinder’ !”

Barbara raised herself up to a sitting position.

“Yes,” said Dreda, with a nod, as her fingers plied themselves busily; “I shall certainly strive to hinder the cruel and the unjust, the child-torturer, and the sweater!”

“Oh, that’s all right,” said Barbara, with a sigh of relief, sinking back to her former comfortable attitude. “That’s as it should be! But ‘ask’ for ‘a great deal of’ what?”

“Of money and practical assistance from those who have the wherewithal to give both or either! To carry out my plans I shall require to prompt the generous, to ‘stir up’ the prosperous. I won’t be content with good works on a small scale when *I* start! I’ll push aside all barriers, and I’ll climb over all obstacles—when I can’t get round them! My campaign shall be carried right into the heart of things,—not at a safe distance from them! And you and Denzil——” She stopped short, angry that she had committed herself.

“And I—and Denzil?” came a far-off voice, in tones so low that its question was almost inaudible.

“And you, and Denzil!” went on Dreda, desperately, “when you get married, can be of the greatest——”

But Barbara had arisen, trembling all over now.

“Dreda,” she said, distressfully—“oh, Dreda!

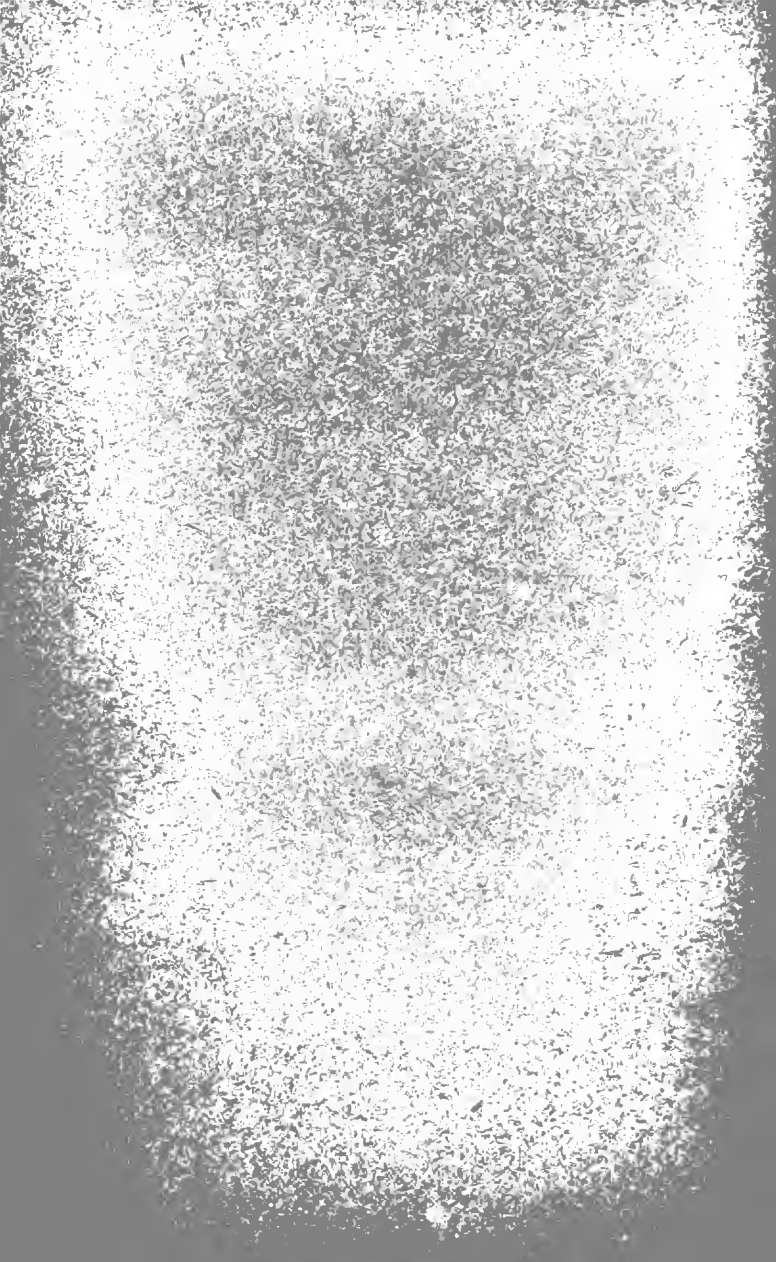
—never say that again; he—will never——.” She too, stopped confused.

“Ah, but he will!” cried Dreda, triumphantly, throwing down her fancy work. “Come here, you hard-hearted little minx; I’ve got you now!”

. . . . .



SHE woke, and the sky was aflame with gold! the  
air grew clear and light;  
Across the rose hills of the dawn, a pathway  
glimmered bright!  
Adown it came a gleaming form; star unto star at  
last,  
Her soul went forth his soul to meet, the last long  
vigil past!



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### Where Glad Waves Smiled.

THE water was lapping softly on the beach. Here and there, in the distance, a white sail intensified its deep and ever deepening green. Far off, the mountains rose like a shadowy, magic land; and the clouds in a tranquil sky, drifted above—trailing snowy streamers edged with light. On the sandhills Barbara sat, pencil in hand, a notebook on her knee—alone; for Dreda was “packing up,” and had refused to allow her to assist her.

“ ‘Bid me good-bye, and go!’ ” she had said, waving her arms theatrically. “Go—and go beachwards!—drawing into your panting lungs the last of the sea breezes they shall get for many a day to come! Bid farewell to sea and sky, to the seaweed and the shells, but don’t bring back a ton of sand in your ‘wooden shoon!’ I want to keep our landlady in her most amiable mood, for manifold reasons which I can’t be bothered explaining now. You needn’t hurry back! I won’t be ready for a cup of tea for ever so long. And I really like to do this sort of work alone, as Perce could tell you.”

Thus dismissed, Barbara had gone whither she was told—nothing loth, perhaps; for the day, though warm, was tempered with a cool breeze, and the outdoor look was inviting.

Besides, as she would have expressed it, she "wanted to think."

She had told Dreda a little—a very little—of her first romance, and had not denied that she had refused Denzil; and she wondered why her friend should have appeared so excited—so jubilant when her revelation had meant so much suffering—to her, Barbara. It had certainly been an immense relief to speak at all of what lay so heavily upon her heart, and the flood of tears which had come to her so tempestuously on Dreda's faithful breast had done her good mentally and physically.

But what should she do, oh! whatever should she do, if Denzil ever guessed, through any chance word of Dreda's, that the years were longer and drearier because of his misjudgment, of his unfriendly determination to hold aloof from her, for ever and always!

Some day—perhaps not so far distant—he might marry; and then, of course, he would forget—men always did—but she?—could she ever forget the stern, reproachful look in his eyes when he had last bade her a curt good-bye?

Very little was written in the dainty notebook Barbara held. Real life had to be lived somehow. How was she going to get through it, if undermined health forbade continuous work?

The sound of children's laughter floated up to her from the beach, where they were building "castles" on the sand, or paddling in the water. Otherwise the air had become very still.

Presently she was aware of a presence beside her, and she looked up, with a sudden fear at her heart—to see Denzil!—Denzil, with a tender light in his brown eyes—Denzil, with a peculiar “waiting” look, as if he but now had said again, “Barbara, who is Anthony?”

She tried to speak, to rise, but could not; and he gently pushed her back again, taking a seat beside her on the sand.

“Yes, Beebo, I have come to you again!—though I said that I would not. And, in doing so, I may be once more foolish; so I shall not put into words all that I feel—I leave you to judge that for yourself, knowing you will be just—and, if you can—merciful.”

“There—there is so much to tell you!” she began,—the tears like dewdrops in her flower-blue eyes.

“Tell me what you like, and I shall listen patiently. If you think me worthy of your entire confidence, I need not say how I shall respect it. But I do not want you to distress yourself at all. You can——”

“Denzil, I shall never know a moment’s happiness till I tell you all! Afterwards—if you go—I shall never blame you.”

“I shall not go.”

He took her hand, and held it; and presently she began the story she now felt his constancy had given him every right to hear.

It was not short, for she did not spare herself;

but he listened without a word or a look of surprise or disapproval, showing only, now and again, his sympathy by a pressure of the hand. Once, he drew his breath hard,—that was all.

When she had concluded, and was weeping silently, he rose, and walked up and down for a few minutes, as if debating something; then he returned to her side, saying gravely:

“Do you wish to be true always to the memory of this—man?”

“I,” she faltered, “shall never—can never—forget him.”

“It would not be to your credit if you could,” was the unexpected rejoinder.

He sat down again, and, bending towards her, lifted her face with his hand, looking deep down into her eyes, which, pure and true as a child’s, returned his gaze wistfully, but without fear.

“Only one more question, little woman, but answer it with all the truth that is in you: Is this man, this Anthony Hagelthorne, to stand between your heart and mine for the remainder of our lives in this world?”

With crimsoning face, she tried to turn her face away from the look in his eyes; but his hand was firm, and compelling, and she had to meet it as she whispered:

“Not unless—you wish him to!”

“My little mountain maid!”

[THE END.]



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